This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

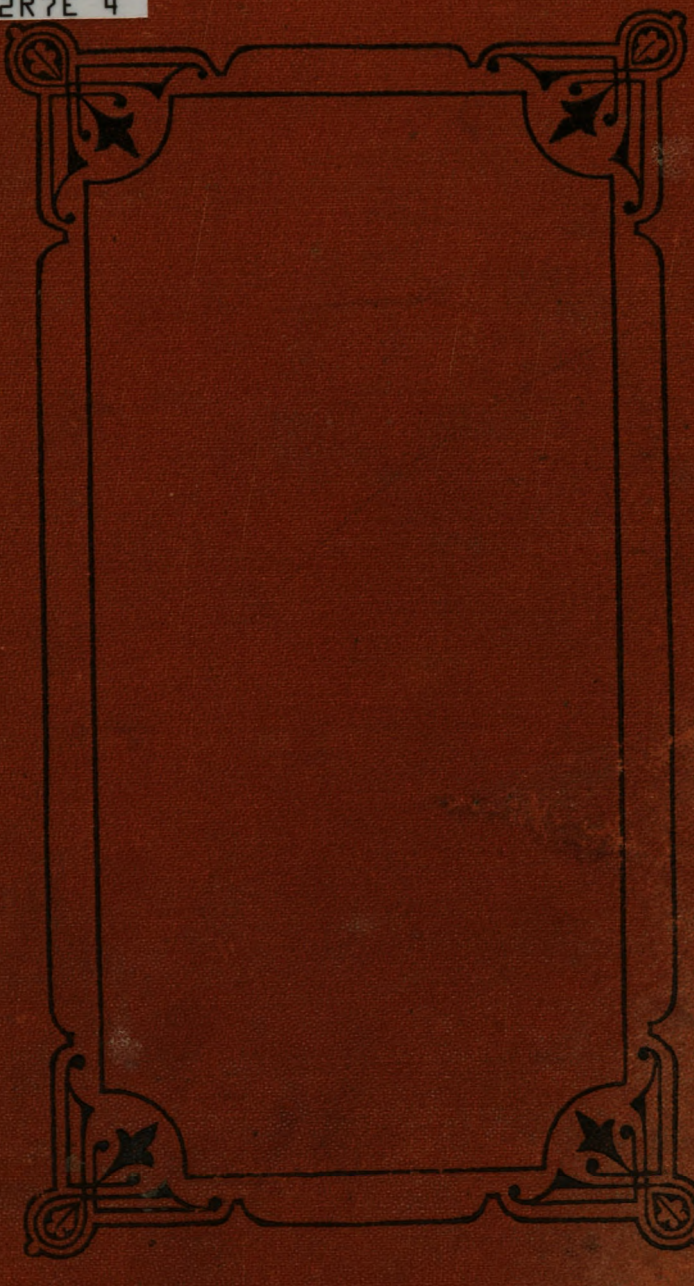
+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

NEDL TRANSFER
HN 2R7E 4



Digitized by Google

KPD 4139

Digitized by Google

TRURO
INSTITUTE LIBRARY.

Time allowed for Reading, 14 *Days.*

N.B.—RULE 7.

"Any member injuring or losing any portion of the property of the Institute shall be liable to such a fine as the Committee may determine, provided that such fine shall not exceed the full value of the property so injured or lost.".

Advertiser Print.

Digitized by Google

A · 18

19.

4. 23

QUEENSLAND.

Digitized by Google

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

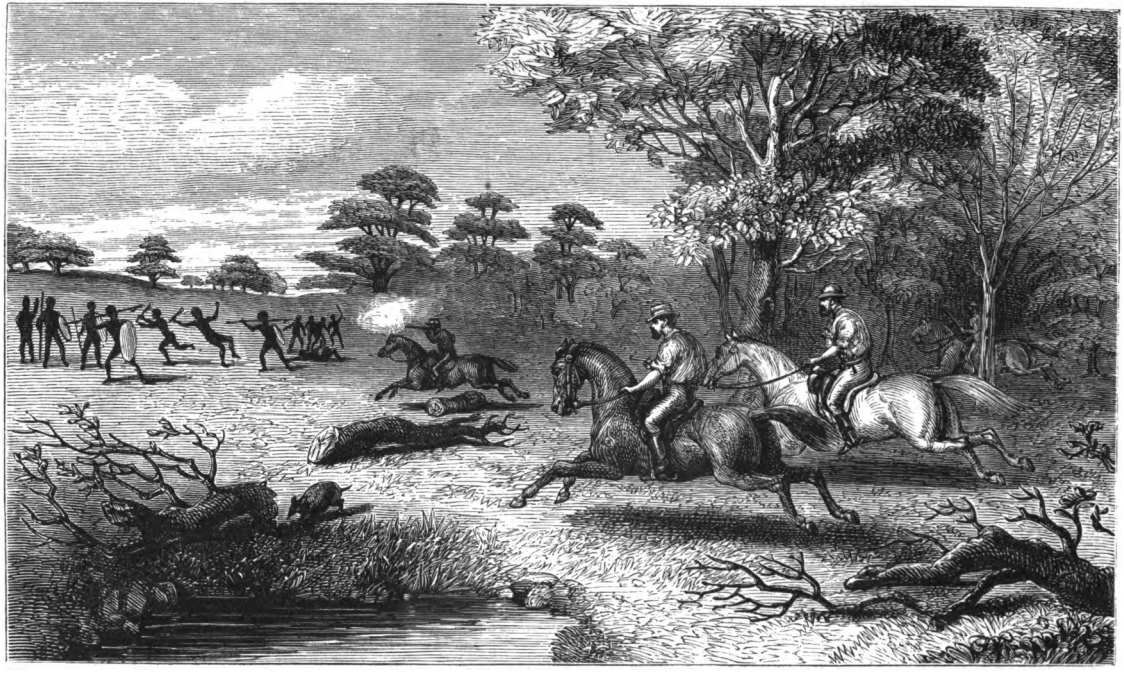
Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

Digitized by Google

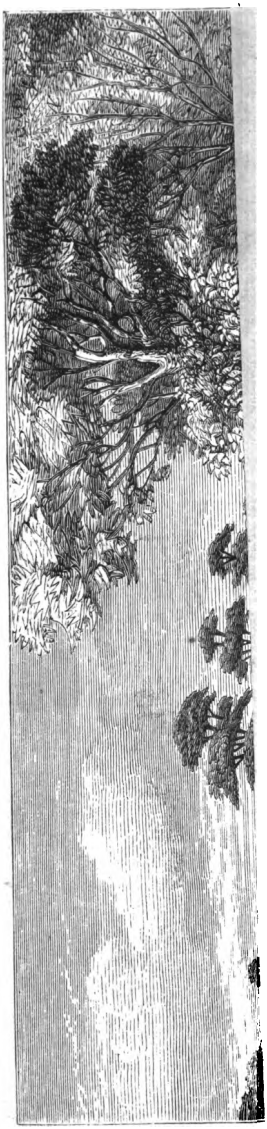
Digitized by Google



A BRUSH WITH THE BLACKS.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google



Digitized by Google

MY WIFE AND I IN QUEENSLAND:

AN EIGHT YEARS' EXPERIENCE IN THE ABOVE COLONY,

WITH

SOME ACCOUNT OF POLYNESIAN LABOUR.

BY

CHARLES H. EDEN.

No 79

LONDON:
LONGMANS, GREEN, AND CO.
1872.

All rights reserved.

Digitized by Google

KPD 4139

HARVARD
UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY
JUN 27 1957

Pick

Digitized by Google

TO HER

WHO SHARED WITH HIM

ALIKE THE SUNSHINE AND THE CLOUD OF COLONIAL LIFE,

THE FOLLOWING PAGES

ARE AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED

BY

HER HUSBAND.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER		PAGE
	Introductory Chapter	1
I.	First Experiences	4
II.	The Bush in Earnest	26
III.	Our Bush Home	55
IV.	Station Life	87
V.	Bush Incidents	129
VI.	The Return Journey	160
VII.	Shepherding under Difficulties	190
VIII.	A Long March	218
IX.	A Turn at the Diggings	245
X.	Sugar Planting	278
XI.	Polynesian Labour Act	310
XII.	Our South Sea Islanders	326

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

INSTITUTE TRUSTEES

MY WIFE AND I IN QUEENSLAND.

INTRODUCTORY CHAPTER.

EVERY PROFESSION and calling in England being already overcrowded, and those unfortunate beings, younger sons, continuing to be born, there can be no doubt that these and other portionless individuals must direct their attention to the only outlet left open, viz. our Colonies; in the ranks of which Australia occupies a large, if not the most prominent place. Influenced by this consideration, I have thought that the actual experiences of one who has himself passed through many of the chequered phases of life in our newest colony—QUEENSLAND, may not be uninteresting or without its use to those whom inclination or the force of circumstances may lead to seek a new abode, and to whom the real every-day life of a settler remains a sealed book. In the following pages I have striven truthfully to set before the reader the kind of life a

Digitized by Google

gentleman may expect to meet, neither unduly colouring, nor, on the other hand, disguising facts, but simply describing the country and the people as I found them. The fact that my wife shared with me most of the hardships and adventures which it was my lot to encounter, has enabled me to give some idea of the life of an English lady in the bush, which I believe has never before been related, and which I venture to think cannot fail to be valuable to married people who may propose emigrating and facing the hardships of the bush. I say 'hardships' advisedly, for that there are many to overcome and much to be endured will be patent to any who may be at the trouble of perusing the following pages; but still, as evils seem always worse until grappled with, and when brought in actual contact with what appears at a distance most repulsive, half of their sinister aspect fades away, so I find that the recollection of many incidents touch me far more keenly now when I recall them, though long years have elapsed, than they did at the time they occurred. In order that the book may prove useful, I have thought it worth while, in many cases, to enter into details, which however trite to the colonist and *savant*, it is all important a 'new chum' should be acquainted with; for a man, particularly a Benedict, proposing to emigrate is beset by numerous doubts and difficulties, many of which are doubtless owing to the ignorance of petty details, which, though in themselves seemingly insignificant, yet go far to make up the sum of life

Digitized by Google

and it is with a view of making him conversant with such details that the present volume has been written.

A fact which should be borne in mind by all people reading Australian books, or who bend their thoughts in that direction, is, that in that country no one loses caste by performing bodily labour, indeed it is just the reverse, and the more a man can do for himself the better he will get on. I have seen an officer, late of a crack dragoon regiment, drive a dray laden with firewood to a house, sell, unload and stack it himself, receive his money and drive off; and have met him that evening at a ball at the same house, and by virtue of the prefix to his name taking the hostess down to supper.

The recent murder of poor Bishop Pattison having drawn a good deal of attention to the importation of Polynesian labourers into Queensland, I have entered somewhat at length upon the subject, for it seems to me that the above colony being the only one that has stirred a finger to prevent the abuse of the system, has, by striving to do what is right, drawn upon itself a great deal of unmerited obloquy. I have endeavoured to set forth clearly and succinctly both sides of the question, leaving the reader to form his own conclusions.

Though the ultimate result of my own labours was fruitless, I shall not consider my experience thrown away, if it prove of the slightest use, either as a guide or a warning to those who may follow in my footsteps.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER I.

FIRST EXPERIENCES.

It was on a fine evening in the beginning of the year 1863, that I stood amongst a crowd of passengers and a miscellaneous heap of baggage on the deck of the good ship 'Queen of the South,' and gazed a long farewell to old Ireland as the already dim Head of Kinsale slowly sank beneath the horizon. I will not trouble my readers with an account of what my feelings were on leaving for an indefinite time, perhaps for ever, the land which held all my early associations. However accustomed to abrupt partings you may be, and I, who had spent my early years in the Navy was no stranger to them, there is always an indescribable melancholy attending the last glimpse of land, and it must be a callous heart indeed that is quite proof against some home sickness on the occasion. With these tender yearnings however my reader has no concern. I blush to confess that the malady attacked me with but little virulence, and the morning sun found me a convalescent exulting in the promise of fair, though distant, Queensland, where the sweet oranges and purple grapes hang temptingly on every hedge, longing to be plucked by her new children, as the

Digitized by Google

Emigration Agent in Leadenhall Street so touchingly described it, with what truth the sequel will show. Besides four hundred emigrants, we numbered thirteen saloon passengers, and a somewhat motley party we were. There were farmers' sons with small capital, which was to swell to enormous wealth in a few years, and farmers' sons without any capital at all, who were even more sanguine than those with it; there were military men with a fancy for squatting and a hope of sport, and university men with more taste for a pastoral than a sedentary life; and last, but not least, there were two fair young girls, with wistful eyes strained towards the land, who, with their mother, were clearly at sea for the first time. But of these more anon.

For a cabin companion I was fortunate enough to have a man who, but that his antipathy to washing himself was somewhat deep rooted, was otherwise a very pleasant fellow. He was convinced he should become a millionaire in two years, not a day longer would he allow himself, but whether his expectations were fulfilled or not I cannot say; probably not, for five years afterwards I saw him driving a hansom cab in Brisbane.

The voyage was passed as voyages not unusually are, with hardly an incident to break its monotony, though for my part I should not have minded had it lasted six months instead of three, for I had become engaged to Lucy Grant, one of the young ladies mentioned above, and Willie Poore, a fellow-passenger,

Digitized by Google

following my example with her sister Jessie, we found our lines cast in pleasant places. There is no place like a ship for making love; and watching the phosphorus over the stern on a fine night, conduces to more low tender whisperings than half a dozen London seasons.

Our emigrants, mostly Irish, were very quiet and well behaved, and submitted with admirable patience to the constant tyranny of their priest, a little autocrat whose combined ignorance and self-importance afforded us no little amusement. I recollect on one occasion a quiet, well-informed fellow, named 'Malley,' had gathered round him a knot of eager listeners, to whom he was expatiating on the congenial theme of the profits of gold-digging. Now it chanced that the priest's ear detected in the man's discourse the word 'geology,' and ever jealous of the conversion of his flock, his reverence made a speedy descent upon the orator, and taking him before the captain and surgeon-superintendent, rated him soundly for his proselytism. In vain poor 'Malley' explained that he had only made use of the word 'geology.' 'Sure then, Captain dear, and where's the difference I'd have ye tell me between geology and theology?' says the priest, in no wise appeased.

The old saying 'that everything, however long, must have an end,' though trite is not the less true, we rounded the Cape of Good Hope—at which point, by the way, Father Quill was in constant expectation of 'sighting

Digitized by Google

Aigypt;' and on April 6, after a pleasant passage of ninety-one days, behold us safely anchored at Moreton Bay, eagerly scanning the sandy slopes of Moreton Island with our telescopes, and watching the sun flashing on the silver sides of the Glasshouse hills, which appeared like giant conical Crystal Palaces, a strange stillness pervading the ship, and the absence of the shadow that had for so many days been cast on the deck by the sails, giving you from time to time an irresistible impulse to look aloft and see what was the matter. The breeze was loaded with the scent of the gum-trees, perceptible enough to nostrils that had for so long breathed nothing but pure ocean air, but which a very few hours renders inappreciable. We anxiously awaited the arrival of the health officer, until whose visit we were not allowed to land; and, during this afternoon an occurrence took place which for many days cast a gloom over us all, and which, as it nearly concerns those dear to me, I shall give in detail.

Previously to our arrival, the wife of one of the steerage passengers had been very ill, and on this morning, just before anchoring, the poor woman died, her last words being a wish that she should be buried on shore. Now, although it was contrary to the rules of the port to land until the ship had received *pratique*, yet at the urgent entreaty of the husband the captain consented to take the risk, particularly as Moreton Island is uninhabited, except at the pilot-station and lighthouse. He, being unable or unwilling to leave the ship, asked

Digitized by Google

Captain Grant, Lucy's father, if he would conduct the service, as he had been in the habit of reading prayers every Sunday on our way out. Of course Captain Grant consented, so a boat started for the shore, which was some three miles distant, with the body, the poor husband, the chief and third mates, and some others, friends of the deceased, thirteen in all. We watched them land, perform their sad task, and start back again, it being then pretty late. We could see the gig, a stout whale-boat, until she was not more than a quarter of a mile from the ship; when suddenly a furious squall came sweeping down, accompanied by heavy rain, which rendered it impossible to see a hundred yards; darkness came on with its accustomed rapidity in these latitudes, and, though we were expecting them alongside every moment, not a trace of them was to be seen. We all shouted, then listened; lights were shown, and a musket or two fired, but to no purpose; and at last we began to fear, what we afterwards ascertained to be the case, that they had been driven past the ship. We watched wearily all night, awaiting their return, showing blue lights at intervals, poor Mrs. Grant and her daughters in an agony of fear and suspense, but not a sound could be heard, except the whistling of the wind through the rigging, for the squall had now settled into a steady gale, and when morning broke tardily on the anxious watchers, nothing could be seen by eyes strained to catch the smallest speck, but the crests of the white

Digitized by Google

horses on the muddy water. We were now seriously alarmed, for during the night we had been buoyed up with the hope that they were near, and might arrive at any moment, but daylight and the blank expanse of sea dispelled this fond illusion. It would be impossible to portray the deep impression this sad catastrophe caused throughout the whole ship; it seemed so dreadful that, after having safely reached the end of our voyage, thirteen of our number should be snatched away almost under our eyes. Captain Grant and his family had justly endeared themselves to all; and in after time we were often touched at the remembrance of the rude yet heartfelt expressions of sympathy and consolation bestowed on the poor mother and daughter, by people we hardly knew by sight, but to whom they had done some trifling kindness during the passage. Time wore on thus until the 11th, when we were to be landed at Brisbane; and, although we were assured by the pilot that boats and steamers had been sent to search the bay, still we had no tidings of the missing ones. By this time all hope seemed at an end, and we packed up our things with heavy hearts, prepared to leave the ship which had been our mutual home for so long; and, under the circumstances, perhaps the exertion of moving was salutary, though it seemed like snapping the last link which bound us to the ill-fated inmates of the boat.

Brisbane, the capital town, and the seat of Government, is about thirty miles from the mouth of the river

Digitized by Google

of that name. It is situated on a large tongue of land; on the end of which is built Government House, overlooking the river, which is here about the breadth of the Thames at Westminster. The scenery near the bay is far from agreeable, consisting of mangrove flats, and swamps, and numberless mud banks, which much impede navigation. Higher up it becomes better, a few detached farms or humpies appear; and eventually, after many windings, you reach the town itself, which is most beautifully situated, but built in such a straggling way, large stores shouldering miserable bark huts, that you are led to believe it more picturesque than flourishing. The emigrants were lodged in the depôt, a large wooden barn—those, at least, who had not friends to welcome them; Poore and myself going to a hotel, after seeing the Grants safely installed in a house which some friends had taken for them. The next day the Grants went to see the Governor, and to beg that fresh exertions should be made to discover the fate of the missing boat, suggesting that the small government steamer should be sent on that errand, but were told that she was wanted to take a deputation down to the Bay, to congratulate the Colonial Secretary on his safe return (viâ Suez!) from England, but that it should be attended to when there was time. On the 19th, however, a rumour got about—how, I don't know—that some of them had been found and were coming up the river; and true enough, in about two hours a steamer came puffing up, and landed them

Digitized by Google

all but one, alas! in such a state of weakness and emaciation, so haggard, so worn as hardly to be able to return the hand pressures by which they were greeted, far less to talk. Few of them have ever quite recovered that dreary fortnight; and poor Captain Grant, from being a remarkably strong man had become quite aged and broken down. It seems that in trying to come alongside, the boat made too great a sweep, and, despite all their efforts, they were driven past the ship in the squall; that they pulled all night, seeing the blue lights, but were unable to make the least headway; and, the wind and sea increasing, were at last only able to keep the boat head on, and let her drive. By daylight they were close to a large island on the north side of the bay, and, being quite exhausted, they determined to land, and, if they found any water, to rest for awhile, feeling sure there would soon be a search for them. They did not then know what land it was they were near, but thought it must be part of the mainland; neither could they tell in which direction the anchorage was, for they were too far off to see the ship's masts. In attempting to land, the boat was swamped, and rolled over and over in the surf, leaving them all struggling in the water amongst the swarms of sharks which infest this coast, one of which, by a strange fatality, took down the husband of the poor woman they had buried the previous day, and who, singularly enough, had before leaving the ship repeatedly expressed his conviction that he should soon join her. Luckily, the

Digitized by Google

boat and oars were thrown up on the beach, the boat not much the worse, but their coats, boots, &c., which they had taken off in case of having to swim, all lost. Finding no water, they determined on launching the boat, and following the land round, which they succeeded in doing, and pulling along to the westward, came by evening to the channel separating Bribie Island from the main, again, however, getting capsized; and this time, though they all got on shore, it was at the expense of the boat, which was stove in and rendered quite useless. Here they were, then, in a wretched plight, with only their trousers and shirts, barefooted and half famished. Luckily, one of the number had a water-tight matchbox, and they were able to light a fire, round which they all huddled. In the morning they looked about them, and found water close to them, most providentially, for they were all strangers to Australia, and therefore knew none of the signs by which to direct their search. Thirst being thus satisfied, hunger assailed them and bid fair to place their lives in as great danger as that caused by the storm at sea. For several days they wandered about without any other food than limpets, of which they found but an insufficient quantity on the rocks, and which afforded the poorest, most unwholesome food, often causing severe vomiting and other distressing symptoms.

It became manifestly necessary at last that some great effort should be made towards the discovery

Digitized by Google

either of more nutritious food, or if possible of some tracks of civilisation; and to this end exploring parties were organised which, consisting each of two persons, should radiate in different directions from the wilderness they occupied. It is needless to enter into the details of the privations which each endured—indeed, which appear to have been common to all of them. Almost exhausted from want of proper food, their bare feet pierced and lacerated by the sharp-pointed mangrove shoots, they struggled on a journey that offered no prospect of a successful termination, as from hour to hour they wandered over fresh and apparently interminable miles of waste. Day by day this continued, until they were most of them so reduced as to be unable to move, and the others, miserably weak, soon expected to be in the same condition, when a boat under the command of an officer in the water-police, who had set about finding them the right way, by calculating the direction of the wind during the night they missed the ship, came in sight, and they were saved, after thirteen days of as severe trial as usually falls to the lot of man.

I found the hotels neither good, clean, nor cheap; and their being built of wood, with only thin partitions of boarding about eight feet high between the bedrooms, little cells containing only an iron bedstead and washhand-stand, made it necessary to be cautious in speaking, as every word could be distinctly heard over the whole landing. House-rent was most exor-

Digitized by Google

bitantly high, the Grants paying thirty-five shillings a week for a cottage with seven miserable little rooms, and some distance from the town. The mosquitos, who it is well known have an epicurean taste for a new comer, made a descent upon us on our arrival, and finding our blood much to their taste, bid fair to drive us mad with irritation. Indeed, a sufferer from their attentions can hardly be accounted as answerable for his actions. I have seen a man half frenzied by pain apply a lighted candle to his tiny tormentor while settled on the mosquito curtains—a rude method of assault, which if it be constantly practised may account for the origin of many a fire.

On May 11, Captain Grant having recovered sufficiently to be present, Poore and myself were married by the bishop to the two Miss Grants, and spent our honeymoon at Sandgate, a little place on the bay, supposed by the Brisbanites to rival the Brighton of Sussex; and on returning I set about getting some employment to occupy me until I could hear from the friends to whom I was consigned, who were large squatters in the Kennedy District. Many were the applications Poore and I made, but nothing could we hear of, all the Government Offices were filled to overflowing, and numerous aspirants were on the list for any vacancy. So being told by everybody that a thorough practical acquaintance with all the details of sheep-farming was necessary before entering into pastoral pursuits, Poore, another fellow-passenger

Digitized by Google

named 'Street,' and I, engaged ourselves as shepherds, with a squatter on the Darling Downs, at forty pounds per annum, taking care that a clause should be inserted in the agreement that we might leave whenever we liked; and finding it was the correct thing not to buy horses and ride up, but that we should gain infinitely more experience if we walked, we decided on doing so. The distance from Ipswich to Wilton, the name of the station, was about a hundred miles, and we were to reach the former by steamer, trusting to our legs to attain the latter. Deep and mysterious were our consultations as to what we should take with us, the important thing 'weight' being left utterly out of the question. What we *should* have taken was a blanket, a spare flannel shirt, and a couple of pairs of socks, a little tobacco, and a quart and pint pot. What we *did* take was, two changes of clothing, several shirts each, and *horresco referens*, 'collars,' slippers, and a well-assorted library, consisting of a medium-sized family Bible, a huge Shakspeare, and some half dozen railway novels for light reading when we should rest under the sweet green trees; any little spaces that were left being filled up, by our respective wives, with trifles such as portable writing desks, stationery, &c. Of course we must go armed, the country being about as dangerous as Hyde Park, so we each had our revolver, and sticking a butcher's knife into our belts we surveyed ourselves, I don't hesitate to say with considerable inward satisfaction. We had a dog each, mine being a huge

Digitized by Google

black-muzzled mastiff. I myself had doubts about his being quite a proper guardian for a flock, but was told that any dog would work sheep in that favoured clime, a remark I found afterwards hardly applied to poor 'Tiger,' who *over*worked them. We started by an early steamer at the beginning of August, the river scenery being uninteresting to the last degree; in fact, when you have seen a mile of any one navigable Queensland river, you have seen them all. Small clearings, with tumble-down huts, stood on the banks; but, with the exception of a few scattered patches of maize and bananas, which are with difficulty kept down, I saw nothing growing, the chief occupation of the holders of these Australian Edens seeming to be staring at the passing steamers. There is a coal-mine on the banks of the river, from which very good coal is got, and a great unsightly lunatic asylum. We reached Ipswich in about four hours, and though it was supposed to be winter, or only early spring, the heat was intense. Who the individual was who selected a site for a township completely shut in by hills, and to which no breath of air is accessible from whatever quarter it blows, I don't know, but the modern Athens, as its sun-dried inhabitants lovingly call it, is the hottest hole it was ever my lot to enter. Here we first saw genuine stockmen, several of whom were knocking down their cheques at the public-houses. Breeches, boots, and spurs, a red shirt either cut off or tucked up above the elbows, and a dirty cabbage-

Digitized by Google

tree hat with flowing ribbon ends, seemed to be the usual costume, whilst a general air of good-humoured recklessness pervades their features. One of them, seeing at a glance we were new chums, insisted on our coming in and having a nobbler with him; and they all chaffed us about our swags, or donkeys, or drums, as a bundle of things wrapped in a blanket is indifferently called. After getting a few hints from them about the road, we started, each armed with a loaf, for we did not then know how to make and cook Johnny-cakes. We trudged merrily along for the first mile or two, but soon our shoulders began to twitch, and we restlessly moved our ponderous loads from one side to the other. The road began to get swampy, and four miles out of town we found ourselves dragging through a thick sludge of mud, in which we sank over our ankles at each step, and ran considerable risk of leaving our boots behind. All of this might have been avoided had we known better, and walked parallel with the road, but half a mile from it. At nightfall, thoroughly done up, we arrived at a bush public-house, and found to our unutterable disgust that it was closed, the licence having expired the night before. However, we were given some tea, and told we might sleep in the verandah. Mercy on us, what a night it was! We were too tired to sleep, and lay tossing about on the hard boards, our soaking boots on—for we feared if we once took them off we should never be able to struggle into them again—listening to the dismal howlings of the

Digitized by Google

native dogs, and every now and then starting up as a long wailing sound met our ears, more inexpressibly melancholy than anything I can describe, and seeming like the warning note of some Australian banshee sent to deter us from penetrating her mysteries further. This, truly the most depressing cry I ever heard, is that of the curlew, which you take no notice of in course of time; but which to us, wet, weary, hungry, and strange, sounded most eerie. At daylight came a hideous chorus of fiendish laughter, as if the infernal regions had been broken loose—this was the song of another feathered innocent, the laughing jackass—not half a bad sort of fellow when you come to know him, for he kills snakes, and is an infallible sign of the vicinity of fresh water.

To describe every detail of our walk would be tedious; suffice it to say that, though we hourly lightened our swags by eliminating various articles, we reached Wilton so footsore that for two days we could not move. Whilst our feet were getting well, good care was taken that we should not eat the bread of idleness, for we were set to work with palms and needles to make tarpaulins for the bullock drays. I cannot say we were expert, spoiled canvas being the principal result to show for our work. In three days we were ordered to get ready to start out to a sheep station, where we were to look after foot-rot sheep—a duty, I need hardly say, simply disgusting. Every morning each animal had to be caught, his hoofs pared

Digitized by Google

—the stench being almost intolerable—and a dressing applied of a peculiar kind of ointment, which, if any of it fell on our clothes, burnt a hole through on the spot; consequently, we were soon as perforated about the trousers as a colander. I don't think in the whole of my experience I ever had such revolting work. To perform the actual labour, too, was very hard, for each sheep had to be lifted bodily over the hurdles, and held down by main force during the operation, and we had over seven hundred on hand sometimes. The disease I imagine to be caused by damp ground in the first instance; but there is no doubt that, like most maladies to which sheep are subject, it is contagious, and, unless immediate steps are taken to separate any member of a flock affected by it, it will run completely through them. Such difficult brutes to shepherd too; for the convalescents will rush on a mile ahead, whilst those that are very bad can barely crawl, and yet you must manage so that they all get enough to eat.

I took 'Tiger' out with me once to see if he would be of any assistance, and sending him after some laggers, he brought the hindmost one to me by the throat, and so hurt that I had to kill it. After this I thought it better to keep him at home chained up. Another most disagreeable task was having to skin all the sheep that died in the night, and if any died whilst out shepherding, we had to lug their pelts in and produce them, or their value would be stopped out of our wages. Altogether it was most loathsome, and we

Digitized by Google

found afterwards that only 'new chums' were put to such filthy work. Our *cuisine* was of a very plain and simple order. We had mutton, for we used to kill a sheep every other day, and we of course had damper. I recollect at first we had rather a horror of eating damper, imagining it to be somewhat like an uncooked crumpet. Experience, however, showed it to be really very good. Its construction is simple, and is as follows. Plain flour and water is mixed on a sheet of bark, and then kneaded into a disc some two or three inches thick to about one or two feet in diameter, great care to avoid cracks being taken in the kneading. This is placed in a hole scraped to its size in the hot ashes, covered over, and there left till small cracks caused by the steam appear on the surface of its covering. This is a sign that it is nearly done, and a few minutes later the skilful *chef* will sound it over with his knife, and if he finds it hard will take it out and stand it on its edge to cool. No disagreeable dust or grit ever adheres, and the smell, especially to a hungry bushman, is most seductive. It is not reckoned right to cut a damper whilst hot, unless it is to be entirely eaten at once, for it makes the remainder heavy. Johnny-cakes, though they are smaller and very thin, are made in a similar way; when eaten hot they are excellent, but if allowed to get cold they become leathery.

One of the great hardships of shepherding is, that there is no rest, no cessation of toil on Sunday, as ob-

Digitized by Google

tains in nearly every other occupation. To the shepherd it is the same as any other day; in fact, they rarely know what day of the week it is, never the day of the month. I don't wonder that ninety-nine out of every hundred of the inmates of colonial lunatic asylums are shepherds; but more of this hereafter.

After the lapse of a fortnight our shipmate 'Street' was removed to the head station, nominally to be storekeeper; the real cause being that he could play the piano well—rather a rare accomplishment at Wilton—and had a very good voice, which I suppose they thought wasted on foot-rot sheep; so his musical acquirements were called into requisition by Mrs. F.

Thus the time wore on for two months, with nothing to vary the daily routine, except when the good people forgot to send us out any rations every now and then, or when the ration carrier would deliver a very dirty letter which he had kept in his trousers pocket for about a week. It was wretched unprofitable work, with not even the benefit of experience, as we were away from all sheep-washing, shearing, &c.; so we gave it up at last, and walked back again to Brisbane, heartily glad to be quit of the whole concern, and not having imbibed a very exalted opinion of the pleasures of bush life. I am sure that squatters make a great mistake, and do much injury to their property, by employing new hands at low wages to work for them. If set to shepherd, the best part of their time is occupied in avoiding losing themselves; they therefore only take

Digitized by Google

their flock a very limited distance, and over the same ground day after day; besides which, being afraid the sheep will stray, they keep them all huddled together, by constantly sending their dogs to 'round them up,' in place of taking them to good fresh feed, and allowing them to spread as far as they like. Better even a shepherd who goes to sleep than one who constantly worries his charge with his dogs; nothing causes them to fall away in condition so much, and nothing spoils a good dog sooner.

On arriving at Brisbane I was lucky enough, through the kind interest of Mr. G. E., the Speaker, to get employment in the Registrar-General's Office. Copying deeds is not an intellectual occupation, but I was very grateful for anything that brought grist to the mill; for I received sixpence a deed, and by hard writing could manage to make fifteen shillings a-day, which was more than the Wilton sheep would ever have given me. A good deal of gaiety goes on at Brisbane: balls and lawn parties at Government House; races, which are really very good; and pic-nics down to the Bay. The heat is very great in November, December and January, but it seems to be much less injurious than in India, as, although men work out in the full glare of the sun at hard bodily labour, splitting rails, felling trees, and the like, with no protection for the head beyond a cabbage-tree or felt hat, sunstroke is of rare occurrence; and when it does take place, I am convinced that bad rum has more to do with it than

Digitized by Google

anything else. The river is very pleasant for boating, and several people have yachts; but the most enjoyable place of all, to my idea, is the Botanical Gardens, which are most beautifully laid out on a bank sloping down to the river, and planted with rare trees and shrubs, both indigenous and imported. Amongst the latter, the cherrimoya and Jack-fruit have arrived at great perfection, under the auspices of Mr. Walter Hill, the curator, to whom the utmost credit is due for his great skill and perseverance. There is also a glorious grove of bamboos, which, as they seem to grow most luxuriantly, should be planted wherever there is water throughout the country, for they would be invaluable to the squatter and farmer in a few years. The town is very healthy, great precautions being taken against any contagious or infectious disease being brought into the country by emigrant or other ships; for which purpose there is a health officer, who boards them on their arrival in Moreton Bay, subjects them to a most rigid scrutiny, and if there is the slightest danger or symptom of any disorder, strict quarantine is enforced; any sick people being landed at a sanitary establishment in the Bay, maintained by Government for that purpose. To this most wise surveillance the country is certainly indebted for its comparative freedom hitherto from typhus, small-pox, and other epidemics. There are a few blacks about the town, who are allowed in from sunrise until sunset. They are a lazy vagabond set, constantly drunk,

Digitized by Google

though there is an act forbidding the sale of liquor to them under heavy penalties, and when in that state beating their unfortunate wives in the most brutal way. They are great thieves, and will never do a stroke of work, except perhaps cutting up a little wood, which you can get the 'gins,' as the women are called, to do for sixpence, or an old shirt; but even they require constant looking after, or they will cheat you by stacking the cut wood round the uncut, and pretending they have done it all. Blankets are served out to them once a year by Government, which I fear generally find their way into the publicans' hands. At the distribution, which takes place at the police court, between two and three hundred used to receive them; bu I doubt if there are so many now, and soon they will be a thing of the past in this neighbourhood; tobacco, rum, and European diseases, unknown to them before, diminishing them rapidly. They are very good guides for a day's shooting, and that is all I can say in their favour.

About the middle of 1864, when I had been a little more than a year in the colony, my old friend John Knox, to whom I had been consigned, came down from his station in the North, and I made arrangements to go up and join him there in a couple of months, by which time he would have a house ready for us; for we mustered three now, a little boy having been born a month before. We were in great spirits at the thoughts of getting actually to work sheep-

Digitized by Google

farming, and everything seemed *couleur de rose*; so, after having got an unkempt Irish girl from the depôt as a servant, at the modest wages of thirty pounds a-year—'and think yourself lucky to get anyone at all to go to such an outlandish place,' we were told—we started by steamer on our trip to the far North; Port Denison, at that time the extreme point to which steamers ran, being our destination.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER II.

THE BUSH IN EARNEST.

THE traffic on the whole of the Queensland coast is monopolised by the Australian Steam Navigation Company, who run their boats pretty much as they choose, there being no one to interfere with them, and charge as highly as they like for the meanest of accommodation. A rival Company was started called the Queensland Steam Navigation Company, and had it only met the support from the public which such a spirited undertaking merited, it would be in existence and flourishing still, in place of collapsing in a very few years—a fate which befell it from the Australian Steam Navigation Company reducing their fares to almost nil; their modest tariff only lasting till the Queensland Steam Navigation Company was crushed, when they were raised again to their original exorbitance to make up for lost time. The people who had promised to support the new Company on its starting with equitable charges were unable to resist the low fares of the Australian Steam Navigation Company; and now I rejoice to say they are paying through the nose for their short-sighted and

Digitized by Google

selfish policy, besides all the money flowing into the sister colony; and undoubtedly the first object of Queensland should be to retain the little it has.

Port Denison we found a most lovely place, but very hot, for it is in latitude 19° S. As a harbour it is unquestionably the best in Queensland, both as regards shelter, good holding ground, and facility of ingress and egress,[1] while as regards beauty it is far superior to anything I had seen; the pretty little township coming down to the edge of the beach, and getting the full benefit of the land and sea breezes, without the horrid mangrove flats and muddy river banks which obtain at all the other coast places; nicely laid out, with good broad streets, and an air of briskness and 'go-aheadness,' if I may use such a term about it, that I had seen nowhere else. The people, too, differing from others we had met, were kind, hospitable, and ready to assist and be of any use, instead of pouncing on a new-comer with the fixed intention of fleecing him. And when we were comfortably installed in little George Bourner's charming hotel, with wild ducks and a plain turkey for supper, we even forgave the Australian Steam Navigation Company in consideration of its having landed us at such a spot. The township is named Bowen, after the first Governor of Queensland.

There is a river called the 'Don,' about four miles

[1] Rockingham Bay was not much known at the time I speak of, but it is a finer harbour even than Port Denison.

Digitized by Google

from Bowen, where the Knoxes had a cottage and some land; the cottage having been bought in the town, and dragged to its new site on a kind of sledge or skid drawn by bullocks, which will give some idea of its size; and we determined to move there until the arrival of the horse-dray which was to take us up to Mount McDonnell, the name of their station, some hundred and thirty miles to the westward of Port Denison. Here Lucy's troubles began in the way of cooking, for there was no fireplace; so we had to make one out of doors, by cutting two forks and sinking them in the ground, a stick resting between them to hang a pot on. The Irish servant was either a downright fool, or pretended to be, and was not of the very slightest use, spending her time in weeping bitterly at the thoughts of going into the bush to be 'kilt entirely,' and making herself so generally disagreeable that I sent her about her business, after having paid her passage, which I found was exactly what she wanted, having been offered higher wages by another person in town. We certainly made curious attempts at cooking. Our utensils were a kettle, an iron pot, a frying-pan, and a camp-oven. The latter, which is a host in itself, when you know how to use it, is a round cast-iron vessel, about eight inches deep, standing on three short legs, and with a lid fitting tightly on the top, so made that you can cover it with hot ashes, there being an iron becket in the centre of the lid by which you hook it off to

Digitized by Google

examine the state of your roast or batch of bread, as the case may be. Now our camp-oven was a new one, and we put in our first attempt at bread very carefully, placed it on the fire, and covered it with ashes in the approved way; but to our disgust it came out black and spoiled. We tried again, with the same result, until I discovered that every new oven should be thoroughly burnt both inside and out before being used, to take the impurities out of the iron. We live and learn, however; in time we got to make most excellent bread, and to prefer a camp-oven to any other. One of the great dangers of an open-air fireplace to women is the risk they run of catching fire, for a red-hot log looks quite grey and harmless until the dress comes in contact with it. Poor Lucy caught fire three times during the six weeks she was there.

I used to roam about in search of game, but the place was too much frequented, and I only got a few ducks. Cockatoos and parrots, however, were plentiful, and they make a splendid pie, or soup, but are often tough if roasted. There were plenty of quail too, but such small fry, they were not worth firing at in a country where shot is a shilling a pound. Snakes—and very venomous ones—abounded; they always prefer the neighbourhood of water, but we seemed to be particularly blessed with them here. I had to make arrangements with a public-house about a mile off to supply us with milk, which, on baby's account, we

Digitized by Google

could not do without, and had to fetch it myself every morning. I don't think I ever went without seeing three or four deadly snakes cross the track close under my feet, and on one occasion I even trod on one; luckily, he did not bite, but as you may imagine I jumped back pretty smartly. They are a perfect pest, and render life hardly worth having, infesting the houses, and getting into the beds, so that you never know the moment you may not touch one. The eye, from use, becomes so quick that they are generally seen; but it is wonderful that so few accidents happen, the bushmen never even carrying the simplest remedy with them.

At last, after six weeks at the Don, I saw a cavalcade riding up to our cottage, and an individual throwing himself off his horse, greeted me with 'Well, Charley, how are you?' and in a few seconds I recognised Arthur Knox, John's brother, whom I had not met since we were boys together. He had most good-naturedly come down with horses to bring us up. We made him up a bed, and the next morning rode into Bowen to make preparations for our journey, and to get a tilt or cover put on the dray that was to carry us. A framework was erected, which we intended covering with duck; but finding that a huge tarpaulin belonging to the station bullock dray, twenty-four feet by twenty, had been left behind in town, we determined to use this, doubled up, instead, thinking it would keep the heat out splendidly. A

Digitized by Google

horse-dray, as known in Australia, is by no means the enormous thing its name would signify, but simply an ordinary cart on two wheels without springs, one horse being quite sufficient to draw it on a decent road. Into this we had to pack all the traps we should want for the journey, which we thought would last about a fortnight. I will tell you how we stowed, as it may be of use to other men taking their wives up country. First of all, at the bottom we laid our hair-mattrass, which being double took up the whole of it; on it, facing forward, we put Lucy's rocking-chair, tilted well back, the pillows serving as footstools, and keeping it quite steady. On either side we stuffed boxes, in fact anything we could, the provisions being at the tail of the dray, and the cooking utensils hung by a chain outside it, whilst a five-gallon keg of water was made fast to the axle underneath. Although at the last moment things came pouring in for the use of the station that had been forgotten, amongst which I may mention a case of champagne and two small kegs of rum, so that every available inch was taken up, yet still I am sure a lady could in no other way travel so easily with a baby in her arms. Certainly it was a great scramble to get in and out, but once seated in the chair it was most comfortable. The only mistake was putting the heavy tarpaulin on, for it made the vehicle topheavy. In the way of provisions we took 80 lbs. of flour, a small bag of sugar,

Digitized by Google

some cooked salt-beef, and a damper, with some sago and cornflour for the baby.

We made a start about noon (October 12), Arthur driving the dray, and I riding and driving the other three horses, one of which carried my wife's saddle, in case she should prefer to ride. Much progress was not made that day—only some seven or eight miles—however we got an early start the next morning, and then our troubles began. The road was a mere track through the bush, for we were in the far North now, away from all roadmaking, and the gullies and creeks we had to cross were beyond all belief; the bank on either side being exceedingly steep, and the bottom, for about fifty yards of loose sand, ankle deep. On coming to one of these we pulled up, locked the wheels by thrusting a sapling through them both, and down the dray slid, lurching and rolling about from its tophamper, as if it would capsize every moment. For this movement the shaft-horse only was required, and he sat on his haunches and got down somehow in a way that perfectly astounded me. My wife and the baby of course always got out first and sat down in the shade in the creek. Arrived at the bottom, we hooked on the leader, and tried to get the dray over the sandy bed; but the horses would not move it. I don't suppose they could, for it was nearly axle deep; and so came the disheartening work of unloading, taking every single thing out, even to the mattrass and the keg of water under the dray, and carrying

Digitized by Google

them up to the other bank under a sun strong enough to roast a beefsteak. Three times that day had we to perform this operation, and the last time I had not tied up the horse I was riding, thinking he would stand, so away he went with the other three, saddles and all, and left us properly in the lurch. We did not come up with some drays that we knew to be ahead, and from which we hoped to get news of the runaways, until twelve o'clock, and then we found that nothing had been seen of them; we were too fagged to attempt anything, even could it have been of use, so we ate what little food we had and laid down thoroughly wearied, Lucy's mattress being laid under the dray between the wheels, and a mosquito net fastened round with tapes.

At daylight we went to look for our two horses that we had hobbled out the previous night, and luckily found them at no great distance, so having filled the keg, a heavy task by the way, for the water was more than half a mile off, we started, and after a repetition of the unloadings of the day before, arrived about four in the afternoon at a public-house at Euri Creek, only twenty-eight miles on our way. Here, however, were we determined to stay until the missing horses were found. I was in a great fright, Lucy's saddle being on one of them, and if the beast took it into his head to roll, most probably the horns would be smashed off, and no saddler in those parts.

As I shall frequently mention 'hobbling' a horse, I

Digitized by Google

will explain in what the operation consists: In Australia we never corn-feed; in the first place the horses would not know what it meant, and secondly we could not carry it with us, even supposing we were able to grow it in the bush, so the horses get nothing to eat but what the country affords. Now in making a long journey the first consideration is where water is to be found, and next good feed. In most cases both go together, but sometimes on a much-travelled road the favourite places are eaten down quite bare, and a considerable *détour* has to be made to ensure obtaining these two requisites. On arrival, then, at the spot selected as your camp, you must unharness or unsaddle your nags and lead them down to water, then put a bell round the neck of one and 'hobble' them. I can describe hobbles no better than by saying they are handcuffs for a horse's fore-legs, two stout straps encircling the fetlocks, and an iron chain with either a swivel or circular links connecting them. The length of chain of course depends on the kind of horse you have to deal with, but as an average about six inches is quite enough to allow; this will enable them just to put one foot before the other whilst feeding, and will be a check to their straying. Some horses are such rovers that only one link is allowed them, and even then by morning they will be miles away, and for this reason the circular links are preferable to the swivels, for you can shorten *ad libitum*. Though an English horse would be greatly incom-

Digitized by Google

moded by hobbles, ours do not seem to mind them, and I know of repeated instances of their jumping three-railed fences in them. The horses are now left to feed during the night, and this is all they have during the long and severe journeys they are taken. In many cases the grass has been lately burnt, and there is nothing but blackened roots left, yet they pick up a living on it, and if not worked too hard remain in very good condition. It is always advisable just before dark to see in what direction they are heading, and if awake at night to listen for the bell, which, in the stillness, can be heard a great distance.

Next morning Arthur started back in search of the missing horses, telling me I had better go on with the bullock drays when they came up, which I much preferred to camping at the wretched little bush public-house where drinking was going on all day. The owners of the drays were four brothers who had a small cattle station on our line of march, and did a good deal of carrying work for other squatters; they were very nice fellows, and I knew they would lend me a hand if I came to any difficulty. Having to rest their bullocks they camped here for forty-eight hours, at the end of which time Arthur, not having returned, I started with them. Euri Creek is a very bad one indeed to negotiate, and on reaching the bottom the horses tried their old game of making me unload, so I ran to the Earls to ask for a pull with their team; instead, however, of pulling me out, they came down and rained

Digitized by Google

such a torrent of blows with their bullock-whips on the lazy brutes of horses, that they found the sooner they cleared out the better for themselves, so the wheeler having kicked the front of the dray in as a preliminary, in a few minutes it was safely on the other bank without a single thing having been disturbed; and, furthermore, they never tried jibbing again, as long as I was within hearing of the crack of the Earls' whips. One of the horses, the leader, a very handsome silver-maned chestnut named 'Farmer,' was the most cunning, sly animal it was ever my fortune to meet with, and the way he could hide, or, as it is called in the bush, 'plant' himself, was something wonderful. So we went on for several days without any accident, for I was becoming pretty skilful at driving by this time, the Earls assisting us whenever we came to anything that was really beyond the horse's power.

Bullock teams are curious things to see. The drays apparently are very easily capsized, for they are only two-wheeled, and the load often towers to an immense height, particularly when it is of wool; but in reality it takes very bad ground to do them much harm. Twelve bullocks is the usual number in a team, the two polers and the leaders being steady old stagers; the pair next to the pole are called the 'pointers,' and are also required to be pretty steady, the remainder being called the 'body bullocks,' and it is not necessary to be so particular about their being thoroughly

Digitized by Google

broken in. Each animal has its own name, to which it answers readily, generally characteristic of the colour, or some peculiarity about it; thus a black and white is invariably called 'Magpie,' a yellow 'Ginger,' and those with no particular mark, 'Damper,' 'Dough-boy,' 'Captain,' &c., care being taken in the selection of a name that it fits in well with an oath, a belief being current amongst bullock drivers that bullocks understand swearing, and will not work without it. Certainly the poor animals have a hard life, the whip being used unsparingly, and a most severe whip it is: some seven or eight feet long in the handle, which is very flexible, and ten feet in the lash, and if skilfully used is capable of taking a strip of skin off at each blow. The hide of an old worker is generally completely scarified. It seems very cruel and revolting to a new comer, but the most experienced and kind-hearted men—for there *are* kind-hearted men amongst the drivers—say it is impossible to make them work without it, though I quite disagree with them, the error being in putting half-broken steers into the team, who don't know what they ought to do, and as often as not apply their strength the wrong way, leaving the old stagers to drag them as well as the load. Each dray carries about three tons, and on arrival at a creek or range, all the teams are put to one dray, which is dragged up first, and then they get the others up one by one, which seems a slow process, but is unavoidable.

Digitized by Google

The appearance of our camp at night was most picturesque: the huge drays, with their tarpaulins hauled over them and reaching to the ground on each side, looked quite weird-like in the flickering gleams of the fire—they always somewhat gloomily reminded me of giant coffins with sweeping palls; the group of men lazily stretched around, talking in low voices—not very intellectual conversation, dear reader, generally about how 'Damper' kicked, or how 'Balley' strayed, bullock drivers, like many other professional men, being much given to talking shop; the dark outlines of the bare-stemmed gum-trees, with the tinkle of a bell and the barking of a dog at intervals; made a curious scene of primitive life, and certainly caused us to feel most undeniably that we had now removed far from all the conventionalites of a society whose restraints could now be looked upon as things of the past, and that bare-armed and open-chested it was now ours to win wealth from these savage wilds, perhaps to help to open out what may in time become a flourishing district.

On the tenth day from leaving the Don, Arthur overtook us, and told me to push ahead of the drays to the banks of the Bowen River, which was about seventeen miles on; this I did, and we camped on its bank, where it was arranged I was to remain whilst he went up to Mount M'Donnell to get more horses, and it was during this day's drive that our only capsize occurred. In crossing a small gully, I had to

Digitized by Google

slew the horses suddenly to the right to avoid a tree, and from the heavy tarpaulin on the top, over the dray went, poor Lucy with baby in her arms seated the while in her chair, which luckily was so wedged in by boxes, &c., that it never shifted an inch, and so that beyond the fright no harm occurred. Such trouble I had to get it on its wheels again! I don't suppose I could ever have managed it if one of the Earls had not luckily ridden up at the time on his way to the next station. This was the only regular spill we got, though I confess we were often very near it.

One of the great peculiarities of Australian scenery is its sameness, which is so remarkable that when you have been a few miles in the bush, you are as well acquainted with the features of the continent as after a journey of months. In nothing was I so much struck with this as in the rivers which, whether large watercourses and dignified by the name of 'river,' or small tributaries called by the less sounding appellation 'creeks,' are exactly the same in every particular except size. I confess I always was under the impression that a river had water in it, but find that water is the last thing necessary to make one in Queensland. Of course I am not speaking of the immediate neighbourhood to the sea, where, owing to tidal influence, there must be water, though salt, at all times, but to the rivers inland, which look very grand on the maps, and from which an intending

Digitized by Google

settler would imagine he was going to a land flowing with water; but such is far from the fact. In ninety-nine cases out of a hundred, he finds only a sandy bed with, perhaps, a stream trickling through it, of less than a foot in depth and a dozen yards in width, but often not even that, only a dry scorching hot mass of sand, with a water-hole at every few miles. The first indication of coming to a river or creek is a slight thickening of the foliage, and most likely the screaming of cockatoos and the laugh of the jackass; then you find a steep bank of from forty to sixty feet in depth in the rivers, less in creeks, and looking from this you see a broad stretch of sand, perhaps half a mile in breadth, and a bank the facsimile of the one you are standing on rising on the opposite side. Perhaps there is a little rill under one of the banks, but that is all; no flowing stream that will require boats to cross it, and swimming and artful devices such as would be delightful to the new chum to show his ingenuity in conceiving, but a most commonplace stretch of heavy loose sand, into which a dray sinks axle deep, and a bank that for steepness seems insurmountable.

On such a bank did we camp on the Bowen River, and thoroughly hungry we were, having had nothing to eat since breakfast. Arthur set to work and made some Johnny cakes, whilst I hobbled the horses, and spread the mattress out under the dray. We slept as only tired men do, and at daylight Arthur started for

Digitized by Google

Mount M'Donnell, to get fresh horses, his last words being, 'Look out for blacks, and don't leave Lucy.' I had not yet had any experience about the blacks, and did not know or think much about them, so asked him, 'What shall I do if they do come?' 'Shoot them, of course. Good-bye, old fellow!' and away he rode.

I then began to think of my position, which was far from an enviable one, with my wife and child, and only meat enough left for one meal, unless the Earls' drays should arrive, and I unable to move twenty yards away for fear of blacks attacking them. The water too was under the farther bank, so I had to go right across the sandy bed for every bucket full. My only weapon was a double-barrel, so poor Lucy had to toil across the bed with the baby and the gun, whilst I carried the keg and bucket, for I did not dare to leave them unprotected. That day finished our beef, and we had only flour and tea to look forward to. There was no game that I could see, and I was rather unwilling to fire my gun, fearing it might attract any natives who might be prowling about; however, there was no help for it, get food I must, for my wife was nursing baby, so I shot a few parrots, which we boiled, but they were so tough we could hardly get our teeth into them. This state of things lasted for four days, when poor Lucy was so ill that I made up my mind to risk going to look for the horses, and take her back to Strathmore, a sheep-station some six miles back,

Digitized by Google

which we had passed on our way, where we could at all events get something to eat, and not be in danger of blacks. I left her sitting very disconsolately under the dray, with the gun by her side, and was lucky enough to find two of the horses in less than an hour; these I drove back, and having left most of the things on the river bank, covered with a tarpaulin, I drove her back to Strathless, where Messrs. S. and T., the squatters, received us most kindly, gave us a house to ourselves, and expressed great concern that we had had such a bad time of it on the Bowen, for they had not an idea we were near there, thinking we had gone on. People may say there is no pleasure in eating, but if they try four or five days on tough parrot, and without sleep at night, I think they will confess there are worse things than a good dinner and a night of glorious sleep. Earl and his teams were here, and intended starting next day, so I went out to find 'Farmer,' the horse I had left behind me on the Bowen, but though I saw tracks of horses recently about there, I searched the whole day in vain, so had to abandon all thought of moving until Arthur returned with fresh cattle. I knew Master Farmer was a rogue, but I did not give him credit for such exceeding cunning as he displayed on this occasion. When I was unable to find him myself, S. very kindly sent his black boy out to help me. Now Jupiter was a splendid tracker, and knew every inch of the ground on which we supposed the horse was running, but it

Digitized by Google

even baffled him, and for a fortnight I searched in vain every day; nothing could be seen or heard of him (though he had a bell on and was closely hobbled) until one day Jupiter happened to go down into a little hollow, with thick scrub, and there was our friend standing perfectly still so that the bell should not give the slightest tinkle to betray his whereabouts, and there he had been in the habit of standing during the whole of the time he thought we should be looking for him, only sallying out at night to feed. Although a most valuable horse if kept in a stable—for he was pluck to the backbone—he was more trouble than he was worth on the run, and the Knox's had to get rid of him. Some of the dodges for escaping work I have known him resort to almost exceed belief. He would let down the slip rails when shut into the stock yard, even if they were pegged, drawing the pegs out with his teeth, and not only go out himself, but first go round the yard and drive all the other horses out that were confined with him. This I have seen him do several times in a forenoon, even though the pegs were driven hard home. He used to disappear for months at a time, when somebody riding about an unfrequented part of the run would see tracks, and perhaps catch a sight of him standing perfectly still, hoping to escape observation, or, if he saw he was detected, never for a moment letting his discoverer know he had seen him, but appearing calmly unconscious of his presence. If you tried to drive him in, he would lead

Digitized by Google

you a furious gallop over the very worst country he could find in his endeavours to escape, giving in at once and going straight as an arrow for the head station, even though it were twenty miles off, when he once saw his efforts were useless; but if you did not seize the golden opportunity, but once allowed yourself to lose sight of him, it was all up, he was miles and miles away by the next morning, and would not be again heard of until somebody stumbled upon him in the same way.

On visiting my traps, which I had left on the Bowen, I found that the dingoes had played the mischief with my saddlery, harness, &c., and that two-legged dingoes had smelt out the kegs of rum, and evidently had been having a glorious orgie, for there were the ashes of a fire still warm, with the two kegs empty, Lucy's rocking-chair quite smashed, and the ground trampled about by many feet. I found out the depredators were a party of shearers going up country, and as I knew the station at which they had last been employed, I determined to ride over and find out their names, not that I should be able either to recover the grog, or to punish them, but at all events I thought I would have the pleasure of giving them 'a piece of my mind' should I ever meet any of them; and years afterwards I did meet one of them, who told me how they managed the whole affair. I was much annoyed at it, for I felt that I ought to have known better than to leave such a tempting bait only covered over with a

Digitized by Google

piece of canvas, and besides, the rum was not mine, but belonged to another station, and I had to make it good. One consolation I had, which was, that they overlooked the champagne, and though they got a great deal of credit from their friends at having 'sprung the new chum's plant,' yet, having allowed such a dainty morsel as a case of phiz to slip through their fingers, considerably detracted from the glory of the exploit.

'B. C.,' the owner of the station from whence the shearers had come, was a man of whom I had heard ever since my arrival in the colony; his name was associated with a thousand dare-devil freaks, any mention of extraordinary recklessness being invariably met by 'Oh! that's nothing to what B. C. did at Sydney when he put three bullets through Dr. Long's hat,' or something to that effect. His story was a curious one, such as could only be met with in Australia or California. His parents were Scotch, and had made a large fortune—enough to start himself and his brothers with a sheep-station each. B., who was a man of gigantic stature and strength, soon ran through his share; and, from his extraordinary eccentricities, became known all over the country. His great passion was shooting with a bullet, in which he excelled; pistol or gun were alike familiar to him, he never moved unarmed; and, when he went down to Sydney, he used to be the terror of the whole place, his favourite employment being to see

Digitized by Google

how near his friends he could plant a ball without striking them—the odd thing being that the more he drank the better he shot. Numberless stories are told of his recklessness in other ways. On one occasion he tied a frail cane-bottomed chair outside the balcony of an hotel, by his pocket-handkerchief only, and then sat on it, and smoked his pipe, with pistol in hand, vowing he would shoot the first man who tried to displace him. How the chair ever held together and he escaped being dashed to pieces is a wonder. Another time, after he had been staying some days in Sydney, living at the best hotel, he said 'he was tired of so much luxury, and should camp out.' Accordingly he lit a fire in the middle of the street, took his blanket and pint pot, and made a night of it, the police not thinking it worth while to risk the chance of a bullet by attempting to disturb him. But, of all his mad freaks, none ever equalled that of his marriage. His brothers had got him this station to which I was going, after he had been knocking about a long time doing nothing, and everybody thought he would settle down into a quiet steady fellow. For some time he went on very well, got the station into good order, and in every way seemed to be going on smoothly, when one day he happened to pay a visit to Bowen, and the demon of drink again took possession of him. It was a tiger tasting blood, and he renewed all his former eccentricities. In vain the magistrates stopped his liquor, his name being posted up on the door of every

Digitized by Google

grog-shop, with a penalty of twenty pounds for any person supplying him, he somehow managed to get a quarter cask of rum, and never was free from its influence whilst it lasted. During this time a Chinese shepherd of his was anxious to get married to an English woman, also in his employ, and told B. what his wishes were, when he promised his assistance and sent a mounted man for the nearest clergyman, who was some days' journey off. An alliance of this sort is very much deprecated in the bush, a Chinaman being looked upon as inferior even to a black fellow, and on this occasion it was more particularly objectionable, as the woman could have got a white husband at any time she liked. When the clergyman arrived, B. had in his mad way arranged the wedding breakfast, consisting of beef, damper, and rum, he having determined to preside over the happy event, and seeing in it perhaps an opportunity of drinking in company not to be thrown away. The bride was there, and all the shepherds (their sheep being kept in the yards for the occasion), but hour after hour passed and no bridegroom arrived. The parson got impatient and the woman began to cry, when B., with a mighty oath, said 'that sooner than disappoint her he would marry her himself'—and married they were there and then. When I saw her she seemed to be a very nice quiet person, and certainly had great influence over him, and managed to keep him out of scrapes. Altogether it is an agreed thing that he is the better

Digitized by Google

for a wife, though much cannot be said for his way of choosing one. I found him to be a remarkably agreeable and well-informed man, thoroughly up in European matters, which for a colonial is unusual; and, as he gave me all the information I required, and never attempted to shoot near me, I saw no occasion to regret my acquaintance with him.

After a very pleasant fortnight at Strathless, another horse was sent down to me, and Farmer being by this time found, I started off, and, with assistance kindly lent me from Messrs. S. and T., got the dray on the off bank of the Bowen, and had it all plain sailing before me until I got to the foot of the Leichhardt range, before which time I should overhaul another detachment of the Earls' drays, who were to help me. My team now was in splendid condition, and I rattled on fast, getting to the foot of the range on the second day, and, as I anticipated, finding the carriers there.

The Leichhardt Range, so named after the great explorer, is part of a great line of mountains which run parallel with the coast, and some sixty miles from it, throughout the whole length of the colony. There is usually a lesser range between it and the sea, but this, by whatever name it may be called—near Brisbane, it is the Main Range; near Rockhampton, Connor's Range; near Rockingham Bay, Seaview Range—is the barrier between the coast lands and the vast plateau of the interior. It averages about two thou-

Digitized by Google

sand feet throughout the colony, the ascent being nearly perpendicular, and the difficulty of finding a road over it has baffled many intending settlers, for, if the only way to get up is by clinging to the bushes, how could they ever get their produce down to port? However, the indomitable pluck of the squatters has overcome it wherever it is possible; and, though the ascents are such as a European would shudder at, and looking upwards at the drays with their centipede-like teams winding slowly along, reminds a looker-on most forcibly of flies against a wall, still, such as they are, there *are* roads, and all stores and wool, &c., from the stations travel by these routes.

Over the Main Range, between Brisbane and the Darling Downs, which Poore and I had so wearily toiled up, there is now a railway, in the construction of which great skill has been shown, the engineer having taken advantage of every salient point, and really turned out a very serviceable road, although the difference in length between it and the old dray-track is nearly double, owing to the windings of the former; and I have heard a bullock-driver chaffing an engine-driver, and offering to bet nobblers on which reached the top first; and really, when the railway was first opened, the 'bull-puncher,' as bullock-drivers are familiarly called, would have won his bet, the rolling stock being so execrable that never a trip took place without a breakdown. I am under the impression it was condemned Indian plant, which, having been rejected

Digitized by Google

there, was reshipped to England, and then foisted on the Queensland *savans* as a most excellent article; I will say nothing about extra commission paid, and little dodges of that kind, but certain it is that the plant was infamous, and the fortunes made were immense.

It was our lot, however, to see no vestige of railway from the foot of the range, nothing but a broad rough stony track, nearly perpendicular, and down which last year's rains had rushed, hollowing out channels five and six feet in depth, and so interwoven that it was apparently impossible to avoid them. The road was on a spur abutting from the main, and on each side the descent was so abrupt that it would give even a goat trouble to go down it, and an overturned dray would have to be looked for hundreds of feet below. The teams were all hooked on one to another, forming a line of thirty-six bullocks, two abreast, and, amidst howling, cursing, shrieking, and the deafening crack of the whips, number one commenced the ascent, the whole staff being employed, those on the near side with whips, and the offsiders with heavy sharpened sticks. I fear it was verily an unpleasant time for the poor bullocks, and a lengthy operation too, for it took a whole forenoon to get the first dray up, and not until noon the next day were we all safely at the top. I put my wife on her horse with baby, and my two best horses—Farmer was one of them—walked me up cheerily. A good deal of care was necessary owing to the deep rain-fissures, and many a spell we had to

Digitized by Google

take, but they were gallant nags, and I managed it with little difficulty, and, what was a source of great pleasure to me, single-handed. And then the view from the top quite repaid the exertion, the whole back country we had passed through being spread like a map beneath our feet, the air quite keen and bracing, so different from the sultriness below; and I don't know that I was ever more pleased than on getting under the Earls' dray, dusty, hot, and parched, and drinking pint after pint of tea, whilst I gazed on the glorious view beneath. The sea would have been plainly visible were it not for the little range before mentioned; and, as it was, we could make out all our old landmarks—mountains which we seemed to have left behind ages ago, but which from this altitude looked close under our feet, and quite appealed to us as old friends.

We were now on the elevated table-land, which stretches away without interruption for hundreds of miles to the westward, and the difference between it and the coast country was perceptible to the least observant eye. This was more undulating and park-like, the grasses of a much finer quality, and better adapted to the growth of wool than the coarser and more luxuriant quality we had just left; the same endless gum-trees, blue, white, &c., obtained, but not so closely packed; whilst every here and there a beautiful patch of plain appeared, with a belt of brigalow scrub surrounding it, waving its silver leaves, and

Digitized by Google

perhaps stalking about in its centre a couple of grave-looking emus. These wobble away at an ungainly but rapid pace directly they sight us, most probably vainly pursued by the dray dogs which join us farther on, weary and unsuccessful—indeed the swiftest dog finds an emu as much as he can manage. Or farther on is a ridge, with emerald-green grass growing at its base, along which sparkles a little stream known to the driven horses and spare bullocks, which insist on making their way there despite the efforts of their driver to retain them, and act as guides to us, who in no way loath follow, and get a draught of a bush-man's greatest luxury, pure cool water. Perhaps the knowledge that we had surmounted the greatest obstacle, and, that from this to Mount M'Donnell was level ground, combined with the elasticity of the air at this elevation, caused us to look on everything in the most favourable light; certain it is that both Lucy and myself felt in singularly good spirits, and went to sleep that night secure that the worst was over, that she would soon reach her wardrobe, of which, by the by, we were both terribly in want, and congratulating ourselves on poor little baby having stood it so admirably.

One narrow escape I had. Whilst the cavalcade rested for a little, I was sitting with the Earls under the shade of their dray, when I saw running along at my feet a green centipede, about four inches long;

Digitized by Google

without getting up I jammed my heel down on it, and thought no more of the matter, though I made the remark at the time that 'I must have pounded him pretty small, for I saw no trace of him;' however, about ten minutes afterwards I felt something in my trousers, and luckily got up, instead of putting my hand to feel what it was, when out dropped the reptile, and I made sure of him this time. They are very common and very venomous, for, although I doubt if their bite would kill a man in good health, yet the agony is excruciating, and many months elapse before a sufferer recovers. They attain an enormous size—in some cases to nine inches in length—the green kind being most dangerous, and are found in houses, hollow wood, in the earth—in fact, nearly everywhere; and great care is always necessary to escape them.

A week from the top of the range brought us in sight of our destination, nothing of any importance having taken place, except the death of a little parrot that I got from its nest, and which was so tame it would run about all over the dray, and come and pay us visits when we were at tea some way off; indeed, poor little thing, its tameness was the cause of its accident, for it would insist on crawling under our blanket at night, either for warmth or company, I don't know which, and was found one morning flattened under baby. Our journey had taken us over six weeks, but, even if tedious, it did none of us any harm, and I got a great

Digitized by Google

insight into bush travelling, more than I could possibly have got any other way, besides becoming a good driver; and, altogether, when I saw the charming little house the Knoxes had built for us, I felt very happy and pleased at having come, in which I was fully joined by dear Lucy, who had roughed it like a heroine, and without one murmur or complaint.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER III.

OUR BUSH HOME.

A STATION or run, as it is indifferently called in Australia, consists of several blocks of country selected by the discoverer, each varying in size from twenty-five to fifty square miles. I will put myself in the position of a man, who, hearing vague rumours of good pastoral land in an unexplored district, thinks it will repay the time and fatigue in opening it out, who therefore has organised a small party of, say, four, and having pushed his way over the range finds the country promising, and proceeds as follows: Having come to the main river, into which all the waters on my watershed discharge themselves, I establish a camp as head-quarters, and begin to explore in different directions. As many vague and erroneous notions of the meaning of the term watershed are current, and much confusion is thereby incurred, I will endeavour to explain in what it consists: The best and most commonplace illustration that can be given is that of two houses built together, or semi-detached, there being a gutter where the two roofs

Digitized by Google

slope down to each other; then calling this gutter a river, its watershed is the portion of the roof of each house, which sloping down to it, casts its waters into the said gutter, the water running from the other side of each ridge belonging to another watershed, and the ridge itself being the dividing range between them. It is so common to find even experienced bushmen bungle over this term, that it is worth while explaining it at the risk of being tedious.

Having overhauled the country in every direction, making a rough survey by means of prominent landmarks and marking trees, I fix on a portion that I think will suit me, having first carefully ascertained by examination of the banks, trees, and description of vegetation, that my intended dwelling is not liable to floods or droughts. I choose, say, two hundred square miles as nearly as I can estimate it, taking great care that all good ground in my neighbourhood is either included in my survey, or that I have its water, thereby rendering it useless to anybody except myself. Each of my companions having chosen similarly for himself, and having found good country for perhaps hundreds of thousands of sheep, we return, keep our own counsel until we have submitted our rough chart to the Surveyor-General, and the land has been granted to us on lease, when we find out people in want of country who have not had energy to pioneer for themselves, and come to an arrangement that we will find country if they will be forthcoming

Digitized by Google

with stock, or sell it to them outright; by this means we not only get a good run for ourselves, but have a good share in several others, or at all events the money that we get paid down recompenses us. I am putting a case in which fortune has been kind, for in many instances a little party starts off quietly in this way, leaving its destination a secret, and many years afterwards a skeleton or two is found with a half-obliterated mark on the gum-tree under which it lies, and which is the only record of the unfortunate explorers whom blacks or famine have brought to an untimely end in the wilderness. Despite the dangers and privations attendant on this mode of life, many men find a strange fascination in it, and pursue it for years. I hardly think it is lucrative in the long run, for their wandering habits become so confirmed that they find it hard to settle down, and so, neglect their runs in search of something new, or else by maintaining several stations on the ultimate chance of selling them; they thereby split up their flocks into small mobs all over the country, it being necessary to stock a run within a limited time to retain possession of it; and thus losing the benefit of what they have, are involved by the extra staff they have to keep up, and eventually find themselves ruined, whereas had they kept to one station and seen it worked economically under their own eye they would have prospered.

The rent payable to the Government for pastoral land is very small, ten shillings per square mile, and

Digitized by Google

is granted for a lease of years, renewable at the expiration of that time for another fourteen years, and the lessee always having the pre-emptive right during any portion of his tenancy or at its termination. This seems just and equitable, for the squatter is put to great expense in buildings, fences, wells, or dams, &c., and unless he could be guaranteed an unmolested occupancy for a term of years, it would never be worth his while to enter into possession. Undoubtedly a couple of hundred square miles for ten thousand sheep does seem an inordinate quantity, supposing other people to be in want of the land, and willing to give more for it; but it should be taken into consideration that, although called pastoral, a great majority of it is barren, swampy, or scrub-land, and that, unlike Leicestershire pastures, Australian country will barely carry a sheep to every two acres—this at least is the calculation for stocking even the richest pastures, and far exceeds the average; so when bush fires, floods, and droughts are to be provided against, and a certain number of cattle and horses maintained, the squatter has not an acre too much. There are new laws, however, since the time of which I write. Runs are now resumed by Government, free selection is permitted, and with the low price of wool and the high price of labour, the days of fortune-making by sheep-farming are long since past; indeed, I think in a few years the real squatter will be as *rara* an *avis* as the New Zealand dinornis; but more of this anon. Class

Digitized by Google

legislation had not yet interfered to cripple the arm of the struggling grazier, and to render nugatory the gallant efforts of the pioneer; the teeth of the scum shipped to the colony by the immigration agent had not yet been taught to flesh themselves in their benefactors and well-wishers, and the howl for the abolition of the squattocracy had not yet been fostered under the malign influence of short-sighted politicians.

Mount M'Donnell is situated on Sullen Creek, which runs into the Suttor or Belyando River, which in its turn, some ten miles below the junction, flows into the Burdekin, the largest and most important river of the north, carrying away the drainage of many thousands of square miles of country, and being, in short, the great artery of the Kennedy district. It rises far away north, first becoming distinguishable from a tributary at the foot of the Gilbert Ranges, from thence sweeping to the southward and eastward, following in an irregular way the coast-line at a distance of a hundred miles from the sea, gaining in the width and size of its bed with every mile, and thirstily swallowing the contributions of its many creeks, until at its junction with its grandest tributary the Suttor, it turns abruptly to the north-east, and rushing down the Leichhardt Range at a place aptly named the Gorge, it, after receiving the Bowen, the Bogie and Don Rivers, finally empties itself by several delta into the sea, fifty miles to the northward of Port Denison. It is unnavigable except for a very

Digitized by Google

short distance, and an embryo town, established by some Bowen speculators at its mouth, has long been abandoned. The Mount M'Donnell run included the Suttor and the Burdekin from considerably above the junction of Sullen Creek with the former, down to the Gorge, where the latter, when in flood, went roaring through a rocky defile, surpassing in beauty and grandeur all description.

The head station was on Sullen Creek, and consisted of a slab hut with bark roof, adjoining which, on one side, was a little slab kitchen, with outdoor fireplace; on the other, the house which the Knoxes most kindly had built for Lucy and myself, and which was rather an imposing-looking edifice, for it was verandahed and floored, and, though the sides were only of slabs, it had four rooms, and the roof was shingled. These three buildings stood in a little wire enclosure of about an acre, quite clear of trees, the backs of the houses being towards and distant from the creek about fifty yards. Then outside the fence on one side came the store, and fifty yards beyond it the bachelors' quarters; while on the other side there were a large garden, stables, forge, stockyard, &c., all enclosed in a large paddock of a mile square. A quarter of a mile farther off stood the men's hut, and farther back, on a ridge, the woolshed. The *tout ensemble* was unpretentious to a degree. I will describe *the* 'hut' or room of general resort, which will give a perfect idea of all bush buildings, and, as it is generally part of a

Digitized by Google

bushman's work to build one or more of these, I cannot do better than erect it in detail. In settling where you will build, it must be borne in mind that water is of the first importance, open country the next. These are little things that often slip the memory, but the necessity of water was wonderfully impressed upon me in 1858, when I visited Carthage, and saw, about half a mile from the bay, a very fine Tunisian line-of-battle ship, finished and ready for launching; and, on enquiring when this ceremony was to take place, was told she had been twelve years built, but the water had so far escaped their ideas that she was not within seven hundred yards of it, and she is probably where I saw her to this day, unless broken up for firewood. However, having provided against a similar oversight, settle the dimensions of your hut, which being done, go and choose a straight, clean-stemmed gum-tree—tap him first to see if he is sound, the timber being much given to 'pipe' or rot in the heart—and then either fell him with your Collins's axe, or cut him down with a cross-cut saw, looking out how the wind blows, so that you get its assistance, instead of falling to windward, which is most dangerous. Having got him down, do likewise with half a dozen more, for you will want plenty of timber before you have finished. Say you have settled your dimensions at 20 ft. by 12 ft., then cross-cut two lengths of as nearly the same size as obtainable, chop a smooth face on each, put your team to them, and drag them to the chosen spot.

Digitized by Google

Mortice them into a square, flat side up, and sink the frame thus formed in the ground, nearly to a level. Now mortice in the corner, door, and other posts, not forgetting the chimney, if you want one; then comes the wall-plate, which ships on the posts, and is rarely more than seven feet from the ground. This forms a solid framework, on which to rear your rafters, which are saplings with the bark knocked off. Never be afraid of giving the roof too much pitch, the more the better, for it will leak less and be cooler in summer. The lower face of the wall-plate is grooved to receive the upper ends of the slabs, not so the ground frame work, on account of the wet resting therein and rotting it. Cross-cut trees the length you wish your slabs to be, and split them, or, as it is technically called, 'run them out' with wedges. If you have chosen your tree well, and it is sound and fine in the grain, with a little practice the slabs will split off like matchwood, it is of no consequence if one is a little thicker than another, all are equally useful; having split enough, take your dray, load up with them, and bring them in, then fine down the ends of each, and put them in their places, the upper ends in the wall-plate groove, the lower resting on the ground frame-work, nail a batten on each side of the latter to keep the heels in their place, and there are your walls finished. If you can't do without windows, you must fit a small framework in the slabs, where you wish it to be, but this does not require any skill; neither do I

Digitized by Google

approve of windows in any shape or form, for the darker a room is the less you are worried by flies. The chimney is a framework, six feet square, joined on at its appointed place, in exactly the same way that the original fabric was constructed. Meantime, the bark for your roof should be flattening out under weights. It is advisable to cut the bark after a good rainfall, when it will strip easily, and without splitting, which is unavoidable in dry weather; also, the greater the distance from whence you procure it the better, as it is in constant demand, and therefore it is advisable to commence stripping far off and working homewards, thereby leaving some trees untouched in case of emergency; besides, you sign the death-warrant of every denuded tree, and nothing looks more gaunt and hideous than these leafless skeletons in the immediate vicinity of a station. To strip the bark, cut at the foot of the tree with an axe, and as high up as you wish your sheet to be long, with an adze, insert wedges, and work it gently off with a pointed stick; but the uninitiated should bear in mind that it is very heavy, and should be lowered carefully to the ground. This done, it is uncurled by the action of fire, placed under heavy weights, smooth side downwards, and thus flattened out. Where trees are abundant, and the weather favourable, two men ought to get from thirty-five to forty sheets a day. Having allowed it time to dry, which lessens the weight, it is hung on the roof by strips of green hide, commencing at the

Digitized by Google

eaves, each sheet overlapping its neighbour. When the lower row on either side is on, a second is placed, and so on, until the whole space up to the ridge-pole is covered. This part of the operation, in fact, is nothing more than slating on a gigantic scale. For the capping, or cover for the ridge-pole, place your soundest sheets longitudinally and overlapping, the whole being kept in their places by stout saplings, with pegs. The appearance of a house thus roofed is very rough, but it is, nevertheless, most comfortable, for the thick bark keeps out the summer heat, and, if well put on, is perfectly water-tight. The chimney is formed of a cone of bark, nailed together, the slabs being lined with corrugated iron, if obtainable; if not, with a lining of stones carried up about eighteen inches from the fireplace. Though bark may seem rather inflammable material, yet, as the chimney is six feet square, the flame rarely touches it, and I never heard of an accident. The door is made out of anything that happens to be at hand, and is hung on hinges, if you happen to have brought any with you; should they however be forgotten, an ingenious plan, which I saw adopted with great success, is to build the door on a sapling, the upper end of which works freely in a hole sunk in the wall-plate, with the lower end pointed, and placed in an inverted bottle, a stout porter bottle being the best. This is also an admirable way of making a gate when hurdling sheep.

Your whole edifice is now completed, with the ex-

Digitized by Google

ception of the flooring, to make which takes some little time. Get a couple of dray-loads of the conical nests of the white ants, of which there is sure to be plenty —indeed too many—within a short distance; pound this up finely and mix it with water until it becomes of the consistency of mortar; then having smoothed all inequalities in the ground, spread it over to the depth of three or four inches, smoothing it with a piece of heavy plank let into a handle, and leave it until thoroughly hard. This is a lengthy operation, and many bushmen leave the floor as they found it, but it well recompenses the pains bestowed on it, and gives a great finish to the building, besides preventing damp striking upwards during the rainy season, when the whole earth is saturated.

Our hut was rather larger, thirty feet by fifteen, with one end partitioned off for a bed-room, but in every other respect was similar, the furniture consisting of a large deal dining table, a smaller one for whist, two bush-built sofas, which answered for beds when strangers came, and a dozen of good chairs. The Knoxes, who were University men, had an excellent library, which contributed largely to our comfort. My house being built by a town carpenter with bush material, partook of the characteristics of both, the chief inconsistency being that the floors were boarded, and the roof shingled. Shingles are nothing but wooden slates; and though they look more finished, I prefer bark, for the hot weather shrinks them to such

Digitized by Google

a degree that, when the breaking up of the dry season comes, for the first few days you might as well be protected by a sieve; a few days' rain however soon swells them to their former dimensions.

A week sufficed for us to shake down in our new home, and I then began to ride out with Arthur to the different sheep stations, and to make myself acquainted with the run. A sheep station consists of two yards built either of logs, brushwood, or saplings, large enough to contain two flocks of fifteen hundred each, with a hut for the two men; they are placed at suitable parts of the run, never less than three miles apart, and unlike permanent dwellings, it is not absolutely necessary, though certainly preferable, to have water near them. Very often there is good feed so distant from water that it hurries the sheep to take them there and back in a day. In such a case you build a hut and yards, and cart water to the men, feeding the flocks towards water every two days, which is as often as they want it, except in very hot weather. We had eleven such stations on the run, the farthest being fifteen miles, and the nearest one mile from the head station. It by no means follows that all should be occupied at one time, for you make a practice of shifting your flocks about from place to place, the change being most beneficial to them.

The sheep are divided into flocks according to their ages and sexes. For example, you would never mix ewes and wethers, or hoggets (two-year old sheep) and

Digitized by Google

weaners. Maiden ewes are kept apart from ewes which have lambed, and the rams form a small flock of themselves, generally being kept near the head station. Great care must of course be taken that no two flocks come into collision, for a 'box,' as it is technically called, causes an infinity of trouble, which is the reason that the stations are so far apart. Should such a misfortune happen, and with careless shepherds it is by no means of rare occurrence, you have to ride out before daylight to the yards where the mixed flocks are, and to draft each sheep separately, which is done through a system of double gates and hurdles, taking an immense time, as you may suppose, where there are frequently 3,000 in all, and requiring a most skilful man to do it with any expedition, unless each flock should happen to be differently ear-marked or ruddled.

A good shepherd's duty is to let his flock out of the yard before the sun has any power, allow them to spread themselves as far as they like with safety, never to worry them with his dogs, but to quietly head them in the required direction, reaching water about noon, taking care that there is no unnecessary crowding should the hole be small, for many thousands of sheep lose their lives annually from struggling for water and becoming suffocated in the mud. He should not come within sight of his yards again until sundown, should never leave his sheep for any length of time, should remark the pasture that pleases them most, and mention to the overseer anything of the kind he may

Digitized by Google

observe. In our part, the blacks were abundant, and therefore he should always keep his carbine or pistol loaded and handy, and never be tempted to leave it at home from a false sense of security, for the natives will watch a man for months, never visible themselves, and the first time they see him unarmed will murder him. This was the fate of dozens of those poor fellows during my stay there, and yet it was with the greatest difficulty they could be induced to carry arms. It is certainly a most weary monotonous life, no break or change of any description, but the same routine over and over again, never seeing a human being during the day, and at night glad enough to get to bed without much talking. Indeed, they are a taciturn set, and I verily believe that as often as not indifference of life causes them to be so careless about their weapons, for they have no prospects, no friends, no hope of change; the future for them is never brighter than the present, and unless a black's spear cuts them off, their most probable end is in a lunatic asylum. I have heard of apocryphal shepherds who would take no wages, preferring to be paid in stock, which in a few years accumulated so much, that the quondam shepherd became a rich squatter; I have heard, I say, but it was never my luck to see, and none that I have questioned closely *have* seen. Indeed this is one of the fictions that are so plentifully dealt in by the emigration agent.

About twelve miles from the head station on the

Digitized by Google

bank of the Burdekin stood the cattle station, where lived one of the three Knoxes. Here was an enormous stockyard, but, with the exception of two huts, no buildings and no paddock. The stockyard consisted of a number of yards, varying in size, built of strong timber to withstand the press of the cattle, all communicating with each other, and combining to form what would seem a complete labyrinth to the uninitiated. Great as is the seeming number of the yards, every one has its specified purpose, and is indispensable for some purpose or other.

Though every squatter has a pet plan of his own for the erection of the stockyard, the main features are in all cases the same, consisting of several yards for drafting, varying in size from fifty to ten yards square, a lane and a crush, which is an elongated funnel, becoming so narrow at the end that a beast is wedged in and unable to move, and useful for branding or securing a troublesome or, colonially, a 'rowdy' bullock.

Here take place the annual musterings, when, assisted by his neighbours, the squatter gathers together his whole herd to undergo the various operations to which cattle are heirs, and as only as many head are yarded at night as can be got through with the ensuing day, the remainder are kept together, and watched day and night by mounted men, who allow them to feed in quiet, not disturbing them more than necessary, but having them so in hand that a fresh

Digitized by Google

detachment can be brought to the yard when wanted.[1] The whole scene is exciting in the extreme, the restless rushing and swaying to and fro of the captive herd, the dull lowing which can be heard at a great distance, the clouds of choking dust, and the figures of the men on foot in the very midst of the maddened beasts, armed only with a stout pole, now stepping on one side to avoid a charge, now with a dexterity acquired only by practice and an intimate knowledge of the brutes with which they are dealing, separating an animal that is wanted from the main body, and placing it before a gate which as if by magic appears opened before the frightened beast who dashes through, to find itself a prisoner in another and smaller yard. All this, mingled with the shouting, swearing, and cracking of stock-whips, forms a scene that must be witnessed to be realised.

The danger, though undoubtedly great to a new chum, is considerably less than it appears to an old hand, who can tell in a moment when the mob[2] changes from fear to rage, which occurs very seldom unless clumsily handled, or shut up too long without water, for while *en masse* they are panic-stricken, and the mad surging to and fro results from the stronger jamming themselves in and forcing out the weaklings.

A cow with a calf at foot is often really vicious, and will charge with malice prepense, but the bulls, strange to say, are quieter than any, and in every case it is

[1] This is termed 'tailing' cattle.

[2] A number of cattle collected together is colonially termed a 'mob.'

Digitized by Google

more dangerous to go into a yard where there is a single beast than where there is a mob, in which each animal seems so impregnated with fear that he loses his individuality.

Branding, though a most necessary, is a disfiguring and painful operation, to which both cattle and horses are subjected. Each station has its peculiar mark, generally a simple letter, monogram, diamond, square or circle; anything, in fact, that is distinct. This is worked in an iron, with a two-foot handle, which being thrust into the fire until red hot, is pressed on to the shoulder, rump, flank, or side of the animal, burning so deeply into the skin as to be indelible. Thus stock that changes hands frequently of course becomes covered with these marks, which detract much from the value of the hide, and in the case of the horse from the beauty of the animal. It is however necessary, for herds are so large, and are allowed to wander so much at will, that they would become inextricably confused, and the subject of more quarrelling and litigation than they are at present, were they not distinguishable in this way. The usual size of each mark is that of a small saucer, and their number can be judged by the following extract from among many to be found in every weekly Queensland newspaper:

'Impoundings. At Gayndale, June 16th, one strawberry bullock, KL near rump, O over M near ribs, blotch looking like Y within a horseshoe (very large) off ribs, △ near shoulder, and small C near cheek.'

Digitized by Google

The example I have chosen is taken quite at random from a whole column full; a blotch brand occurs when the animal, being imperfectly secured, by struggling causes the instrument to move about; or the iron, being improperly heated, has had to be applied again, causing an ugly indistinguishable *blotch*, for no other name so well expresses it. Every person in the colony slaughtering a beast is obliged to produce the hide, if required, within a certain time, and every butcher must hand over to the sergeant of police the brands of all animals passing through his hands, by which means a great check is put on cattle stealing.

Queensland cattle resemble very closely the usual run of those in England, whence their ancestors have been imported; indeed, no bull is now-a-days admitted into a herd of any magnitude or pretension to good blood unless he has a known pedigree: most squatters have the fathers of their flock imported direct from the old country. All cattle, as loosely herded as ours are, deteriorate slightly, the lost principle being, however, soon restored by domestication. Amongst the milking cows on a station you see as fine points as you would in her well-bred English sister, and most likely her calf will be better still; whilst the offspring of the same, if allowed to run wild, become in a short time stunted and ugly, and whilst losing all the better qualities, seem to imbibe a downward strain, which soon renders them unrecognisable as coming from the

Digitized by Google

same fountain-head. Of course this is traceable to the early throwing together of the sexes, the offspring being always dwarfed and ill-grown. Soon after my arrival in the colony, I remember being struck by the curious sight of a heifer sucking her mother, whilst her own calf was actually performing the same operation on *herself*; and since then I have seen the same thing repeatedly. On this account it is usual on large cattle stations to have a separate establishment some miles away, called a heifer station, to which the calves are sent on being weaned, and not permitted to join the main herd until three years old. Though by this plan you have not such large increase, yet you are amply repaid by the size, beauty, and healthy appearance of your herd, for to my eye a small herd of fine cattle is far preferable to a larger one made up partly of good and partly of dwarfed and stunted beasts, such a mixture showing that there is a screw loose somewhere.

In the neighbourhood of the Darling Downs, and indeed throughout the older colonies, there are numbers of wild cattle. Originally domesticated, through insufficient care they have strayed, and become quite wild and useless; as their flesh is good for nothing they are shot down at every opportunity, the pasture and water they consume being valuable, and therefore very naturally and properly begrudged them.

The Queensland squatters have suffered great loss by pleuro-pneumonia, an epidemic which has appeared in

Digitized by Google

all parts of the colony despite the efforts made to stay its ravages. It is a most acute inflammation of the chest, with rapid prostration of strength, and a fetid discharge from the nostrils and eyes, which goes on from twenty-four hours to four and five days after the animal is attacked, at the expiration of which it drops down dead. I am not prepared to assert that it is contagious, but I think it is, and it undoubtedly is infectious, a district which had hitherto been perfectly free being attacked on the entry of some working bullocks which were afterwards ascertained to have been suffering. The received idea is that the discharge from the nostrils commences before the disease is so far advanced as to put the animal off his feed, when some of the mucus dropping on the ground, any other beast grazing on that spot will assuredly be seized, and this is borne out by the fact that it is invariably carried from place to place by the teams, who are in the habit of using the same camping grounds; and so a man may unyoke to-night with a sound string of bullocks and to-morrow morning find half of them down. The most stringent measures were adopted under the supervision both of the Government and the squatters, inspectors of cattle being stationed in different parts, with very arbitrary power should they detect the slightest sign of this dreaded malady; but in vain, for despite their utmost vigilance it made good its footing, and swept from south to north, causing serious loss to the squatter, and utterly

Digitized by Google

ruining the poor carrier who had invested the savings of years in a couple of teams, which he was forced to destroy. On some of the runs the air was burthened with the stench from putrid carcases, the rifle bullet being found the only remedy for animals already attacked, and inoculation the only safeguard for the sound.

The process of inoculation consists in procuring the virus from the lungs of a diseased beast, and making a small opening in the under part of the tail of the animal you are operating on. It is nothing more than vaccination, and has contributed greatly to stay, if not to root out, the pest; the only evil result to the beast being the occasional loss of his tail, which sometimes drops off, and must be a serious matter in a country where flies are a perfect plague. Great care should be taken in meddling with this kind of work that the hands are perfectly sound, the slightest abrasion coming in contact with the virus will prove painful and difficult to heal.

The principal use hitherto made of the vast numbers of cattle that range Australia, has been to slaughter and boil them down for their fat and bones, the meat never being taken into consideration, but serving only to gorge the disgusting looking pigs always to be found at an establishment of the kind. Now that attention has been called to this unavoidable waste, it is to be hoped that some plan will become known whereby these masses of flesh can be trans

Digitized by Google

ported sweet and fresh to a European market. Several ingenious plans have been tried, but none, I fear, crowned with success. A most feasible method seemed that of injecting brine, which, forcing out the blood, took its place, its ramifications thus extending to the remotest part of the carcase; but I believe it wanted in some item to make it succeed. Great hopes were entertained that Mr. Mort would conquer the difficulty with his 'freezing process,' which consisted of a ship fitted with iron cylinders into which the carcases were put entire, chemicals being employed externally to keep their contents frozen; but this also proved futile. I believe Mr. Postle of Victoria has a plan in contemplation, though I know nothing of the particulars, but with all my heart wish him a happy solution of what has puzzled so many brains. Messrs. Tooth and Cran have a meat-preserving establishment near Maryborough, which it is said succeeds so well that similar undertakings are in contemplation in other parts of Queensland. It will be a happy day for the squatters when something turns up which will bring a little grist to the mill, for bad seasons, high wages, and the reduced price of wool, have clipped them as closely as ever their shearers clipped their favourite flock of wethers. Poor fellows! were it not for their Micawber-like hopefulness, I don't know how they could struggle on.

The stock-whip, which bears such a prominent part in all dealings with cattle, is from twelve to fourteen

Digitized by Google

feet in length, with a short light handle of about fourteen inches long, to which it is attached by a leather keeper as on a hunting crop. A great deal of time and pains is spent in their construction, a good maker becoming known all over the country, and earning a nice little addition to his wages by selling them, the price varying from one to three pounds, the more expensive ones being more for ornament than use. The whip is made of a carefully-selected strip of green hide, great attention having been paid to curing it. The best way I know is to peg or nail the hide out in some dry place directly it is stripped from the beast, and rub in salt with the feet. The ants will soon clear away any pieces of flesh which may adhere from unskilful or hurried flaying. After a few days, tread in ashes, and when moderately dry, trim off the rough edges, and place it in some dry thoroughfare, where the more it is walked over the better and more pliable it becomes. The great art in cutting a whip out consists in judging the taper of each strand so as to bring the heaviest part or belly in its proper place according to the required size; this can only be acquired by practice, and upon it depends the worth of the whole whip. The usual number of strands used is sixteen, which make a beautiful whip, each gradually increasing in size until the belly, which is no great distance from the handle, is reached, when they gradually fall away to nothing; this tapering is an anxious proceeding, as one slip through inattention may spoil the

Digitized by Google

work of hours. All the strands being successfully cut, the hair has to be scraped off, which is always done with the grain, and then comes the paring, when the upper inner and lower outer edge of each has to be most carefully removed, leaving a beautifully thin flat strand as pliable as a kid glove. The plaiting is by far the easiest and quickest part, and can be learnt in ten minutes; a smaller whip is always used for a heart to give weight and consistency, and the strands are plaited over it. Having rolled, stretched, and greased it well, it is ready for the fall, which is a strip of strong hide attached to the ends of the strands, to which in its turn is made fast the cracker, composed of either twisted silk or horsehair, and it is now complete except the handle, which is made of any hard wood according to fancy; I prefer rosewood or brigalow. This also is a great field for bush talent, all kinds of devices being carved on them, and is a thing that shepherds often take to, to while away the time and make a little money. A new chum begins to hold his head up when he can kill his beast and turn him into good salt beef and a stock-whip. I know I experienced great pleasure when I finished my first, and found it fell easily. The use of the instrument when made is far from easy, and it is tantalising to a degree for a greenhorn to see a little bush urchin flourishing a whip five times his own length, and making the whole place ring with a succession of rapid reports louder than a pistol, and seemingly without the

Digitized by Google

least exertion; whilst trying it himself, he finds the lash coil round and round him, giving him some pretty smart cuts, and forcing the conclusion on him that like many other things it is not half so easy as it looks.

About the time of our settling in our house, the beautiful newly-found country lying some two hundred miles to the westward of Mount M'Donnell, called the 'Hinders,' which consisted of vast plains with most perfect pasture for sheep and cattle, was being taken up. John Knox, one of the discoverers, had secured a splendid run. The whole traffic passed by our station, and travellers having seventy miles of bad road before reaching the next, and, indeed, the last place where they could lay in rations, our store and blacksmith were in great request. Each station has a store, which contains everything from a penny whistle to a sheet-anchor. Flour, sugar, tea, tobacco, boots, saddlery, clothing, are of course the staple stock, but the out-of-the-way things that are in request are wonderful. Who would imagine crinolines would be asked for, or lollipops? Yet we used to sell off both as fast as we got them up. As long as there are plenty of travellers, nothing can be more lucrative than a good store, for the prices put upon the things are very high, though when the cost of carriage is taken into consideration—ours was 12*l.* a ton of 2,000 lbs.—the risk, and the length of time the squatter has to lie out of his money, not to say anything about the trouble, they can hardly be considered as too

Digitized by Google

exorbitant. The risks are greater than many people imagine. To begin with there are bad cheques, for all payments are made in paper, coin beyond a few shillings being unknown. Then there is possible damage by floods during the transport; for though the carriers sign an undertaking to deliver the goods in the same order and condition in which they receive them, it is hard to recover from men who have nothing, the very teams they are driving being rented from yourself. There is risk of loss by fire too, for I have seen a whole store burnt to the ground more than once; and lastly, you have to keep a constant supply on its way up from Sydney; and just as your largest order has been shipped, a new road is discovered, and you don't have a traveller a month near you; meantime the white ants are demolishing everything in your crowded store, for it will not pay you to return them, so perforce you must send them on, or let them spoil, the loss more than eating up any profit you may have made before. I mention this because it is a common practice for men to come to a station store and grumble at the prices, never taking into consideration that it is for their own convenience that the goods have been ordered up, or giving a thought to the risks that are on the cards.

Your own shepherds are your most steady customers. Their rations are as follows, weekly:—

	lb.
Tea	¼
Sugar	2
Flour	8
Meat; *ad libitum.*	

Digitized by Google

But they believe in change of diet, and get pickles, potted meats, and other delicacies, sometimes to such an extent that they are in debt, instead of having money to receive. The regular men belonging to the station are charged a far lower price than travellers, and everything done to vary their diet, by sending them pumpkins, rice instead of flour, and other little things of the kind which makes their lives a little less miserable; indeed, the Grants were so kind to their men as to keep a library for them, a new book being taken out to anyone wanting it by the ration carrier. I have noticed that, as a rule, a shepherd is never so happy as when he is physicking himself. I don't much know in what esteem the great Holloway is held in England, but his boluses and ointment—the former of which, to give the devil his due, must be harmless, or the bush receipt of beginning with six, and going on doubling the dose up to four or five dozen, would hardly act as it does—are in great esteem here, the pill being eaten as if it were a vegetable, and the ointment proving a very valuable safeguard against the everlasting flies, which settle on the slightest scratch and inflame it. The amount of pills I have known consumed by one man in particular would appear incredible anywhere else. He was such a devout believer in their merits that he insisted on sharing them with his dog, greatly to the disgust of that quadruped. Roll on, Holloway! the antipodes will swallow you to any amount.

Digitized by Google

'Cockle,' of antibilious reputation, has a few followers, but his glory, as opposed to Holloway's, is that of the reflected compared to the real rainbow, the reason of his limited popularity being that the results of devouring an equal number of each are considerably different, and in this case quantity not quality has carried the day. Epsom salts is a drink to which they are particularly attached, and can they only get soda and acid enough to make it effervesce, they are delighted, and I have known two of them play at cards all night for ounce packets of this charming beverage.

In our kitchen were a married couple: the wife used to cook for us and to clean the hut, the husband being what is termed generally useful, getting water and firewood up, milking the cows, and helping to kill and salt the beef. The poultry yard was well filled, for we had over a hundred laying hens, but they had been neglected and allowed to stray into the creek, where they had nests, and we rarely got more than two or three eggs a day, until Lucy took them in hand, and then having repaired the hen-house, we used to keep them locked up—a proceeding to which, after a few days, they became used, and thus we never had any more trouble in getting three dozen eggs a day. We had abundance of milk, there being ten milking cows always in the paddock. As soon as one ran short, she and her calf were turned out, and another brought from the cattle station. When first broken in to milkers they are very wild, and I think an English

Digitized by Google

milkmaid would be astonished at the method of bringing them into subjection. In every milking yard is an apparatus for confining a cow's head, called a 'bail.' This consists of an upright stanchion, five feet in height, let into a framework, and about six inches from it another, fixed at the heel, the upper part working freely in a slit, in which are holes for a peg, so that when the peg is out, and the movable stanchion is thrown back, there is abundance of room for a cow's head and horns, but when closed, at which time the two stanchions are parallel to each other and six inches apart, though her neck can work freely up and down, it is impossible for her to withdraw her head. Outside the yard, but in front of the bail, is placed a rough capstan, with a couple of bars, to which leads a very strong four-stranded green hide rope, which has a noose at the end, and is called the headrope.

The cow is now in the yard, and is to receive her first lesson, so whoever is to rope her goes up to her with the noose at the end of a long pole, and, after having to drop it some half-dozen times, and spring up the rails to avoid being horned, he will most likely get it placed nicely over her horns, or, if a polley cow,[1] her neck must do. She will now begin capering about at a fine rate, so, watching your opportunity, you pass the end of the head-rope through the bail, and fasten it to the capstan; kicking and bellowing with rage, she is then wound up, and her head being through,

[1] Hornless cattle are so called.

Digitized by Google

the bail is locked, the rope taken off, and her ladyship left to meditate on things in general until sundown, when she is let loose. The next day, she comes into the yard, sees them all bail up when told, and then undergoes the same operation again, and in a week, if a well-conditioned beast, when you give her a slap with your hand, will walk up and put her head in quite willingly. Old cows will sulk, and never take to it—indeed, they are not worth breaking in. They are very sly, too, and keep back their milk so well that, five minutes after you fancy you have drained them thoroughly, you see their udder distended for the calf. When a cow is bailed up, unless you thoroughly know her, you always use a leg-rope, which trices up the hind leg on the side you sit to milk, and prevents her kicking; but many a time I have had a cunning old devil wait until my bucket was nearly full, and then fall down bodily on it, and I was lucky if, by throwing myself back in the filth, I escaped being crushed under her. Most of them, however, if taken young, break in very kindly, and in time you get your number made up of milker's calves, which, being always accustomed to be handled, hardly want more than showing what you wish them to do. The calves are penned up all night, and as you finish milking each cow, you turn her calf out to her, which you also sometimes do to a cow that won't milk freely, whilst she is in the bail, when she will let down her milk to the calf, and you drive it away and reap the

Digitized by Google

benefit; poor thing! once down she cannot recall it. I am very fond of cattle, they are such intelligent, nice animals; and I know few prettier sights than the affection they show for their offspring—the way the poor mother will stand and let the calf butt at her with its head, and the agony shown by one that has calved whilst travelling stock, when of course the little thing must be destroyed; the poor mother, though reluctantly driven from the place lowing piteously, will almost invariably break away in the night and find its way back to where the calf is lying snarled over by the dingoes, that have so disfigured it that even she would scarcely know it. The word 'bail up' carries another and more ominous meaning with it in Australia, being the expression used by the bush-ranger to notify the startled traveller that, unless he stops and throws his arms up in the air, he will be shot.

From so many passers-by wanting meat, we had often to kill—frequently four times a week. The operation must always take place in the evening, being so timed that when the carcase is dressed and left for the night darkness should have fallen, otherwise the hawks will mangle and tear it to pieces. The beast is shot either with a rifle or pistol, and then wound up on the gallows, which is a kind of windlass on two uprights, twenty feet high, having four arms, to which are attached ropes to turn it. The same reason necessitates its being taken down at daylight, when it is

Digitized by Google

carted to the meat-store, cut up, and salted. This is a very ticklish operation in the hot weather, and a good deal is often unavoidably lost. After the salt—mixed with a small quantity of saltpetre, to give firmness and a red hue—has been well rubbed in by hand, the meat is packed in a cask; a wooden plug is withdrawn from the bottom of this cask, and the juices allowed to drain into a bucket for twenty-four hours, when it is all taken out and salted again, any tainted pieces being thrown away. The old brine from previous killings having been boiled to clear it of all impurities —it is of the right strength when an egg will float in it—and allowed to cool, is now poured over the meat, which has been replaced in the cask, the plug preventing it from escaping, and weights placed on it to keep it submerged. With attention it will now remain sweet until consumed; but one tainted piece, however small, will soon turn a whole cask.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IV.

STATION LIFE.

THE growth of wool being the object of primary importance to the squatter, it may not be here amiss to give some brief account of the origin and rise of this great source of wealth, which will show how singularly adapted to its culture the country has proved, and the enormous export arising from the foresight and energy of Mr. M'Arthur.

The convict ships arriving in New South Wales in 1788, brought one bull and calf, four cows, one stallion, three mares and three foals; and in the same year the first sheep were imported from Bengal, twenty-nine in number. They were small and unsightly, having large heads, Roman noses, drooping ears, narrow chests and shoulders, with high curved backs and very long legs, and moreover having coarse and frequently black wool mixed with hair, the latter preponderating. These throve in a marvellous way, the hair gradually disappearing and being succeeded by a fleece—a metamorphosis which, though greatly to be attributed to the climate, was undoubtedly

Digitized by Google

accelerated by judicious crossings with sheep from England. Still, they were not quite what they should be yet. The wool that has succeeded the hair, though undeniably wool, not being fine in staple, and the colonists principally directing their attention to the size of the carcase, which indeed they had doubled.[1] About the beginning of this century, the idea of importing merinos—they being found to thrive in England, and particularly in Saxony—struck Mr. M'Arthur, and he therefore obtained four, which belonged to the Governor of the Cape of Good Hope. His enterprise was fully rewarded, and on his visiting England in 1804 and showing some samples of his fleeces, the woollen manufacturers pronounced them good; and the matter being brought to the notice of the Government—Lord Camden was then Colonial Secretary—it was received in a most liberal way. A grant of 10,000 acres was ordered him in any place in Australia he might select; and he returned with the finest sheep obtainable, some being taken from the king's flocks. From these small beginnings have sprung the whole of the vast trade now carried on between Australia and the mother country—a trade such as the early wool-growers, however sanguine, could never have hoped for in their wildest dreams. The first export took place in 1806, when 245 lbs.

[1] In 1800 there were only 6,124 sheep in New Holland, in 1813 they had increased to 65,121, and in 1828 they numbered 536,391.—*Wentworth's New South Wales.*

Digitized by Google

UTE TRUST INSTITUTE

were shipped to England, since when the increase has been as follows:—

	lbs.		lbs.
1806	245	1840	9,721,243
1807	562	1845	24,177,317
1810	167	1850	39,018,221
1815	73,171	1855	49,142,306
1820	99,415	1860	59,165,939
1825	382,907	1865	109,734,261
1830	1,967,309	1867	133,108,176
1835	4,210,301		

An amount truly prodigious, and which has quite overwhelmed the trade with Germany, whence the bulk of the wool used to come, the imports from that country having diminished from 18,000,000 lbs. in 1845, to 4,000,000 lbs. in 1867. This increase ceases, however, to be so astonishing when it is explained, that though the wool in all other tropical climates shows a tendency to degenerate into hair on moving the sheep to a lower latitude, in Australia it is not the case, where the fleece, though it becomes lighter, retains its pure characteristics, thus showing how gloriously adapted the country is to its growth.

In addition to the Knoxes and myself, were two overseers, one of whom was a canny old Scotchman, who having been many years amongst sheep was a splendid hand at managing them, and whose services were therefore invaluable to a novice. Their duties were to move the sheep from place to place, to search for any that may be lost, and to visit the different stations for the purpose of counting them. This last duty requires a great deal of practice.

Digitized by Google

In the morning is the best time, when instead of throwing the yard gate wide open it is only partially unclosed, allowing two or more to pass out abreast, according to a man's proficiency in counting. Some, from being always at this work, can count six abreast, but most people content themselves with two. The shepherd stands near the gate with a smooth stick and a knife, with which he cuts a notch in the stick at the end of each hundred, when the counter cries out 'tally.' It is a very fatiguing operation; the eye and brain become giddy and reel from resting so long on the moving mass, and the attention must never flag, nor any attempt be made to rectify an error, or you are utterly lost. In the morning they pour out very rapidly, jamming and jumping over one another in their anxiety to get out to feed, so that if you have not thorough confidence, it is better to reserve your counting until the evening, when they walk in leisurely enough.

In moving sheep from one station to another, of course the shepherd feeds them to the required place, but the overseer must see to the man's blankets, rations, &c., that they are ready on his arrival at the new hut.

In the case of lost sheep, a shepherd ought immediately to report, either by coming into the head station after sundown, or by sending a message, should he imagine any to be missing. The overseer then rides out, accompanied by a black boy, of whom there are

Digitized by Google

generally one or two on the run, and casts about until he finds their tracks, which are followed up until the wanderers, or such of them as have not been destroyed by the native dogs, are found.

Lambing takes place about the end of May, but the time varies much, according to the ideas of the owner, some trying to cram three lambings into two years. It is an anxious time, for the squatter looks to his wool to pay the working expenses of the station, and to the increase for his profit. Care is taken that several portions of the run, being near water and having good feed, are reserved to form the lambing stations, and there, prior to commencing, are made yards, &c., and tents taken out for the men, of whom you have to engage several extra at this time. The ewes having arrived are shepherded within an easy distance of the yards, generally by two men, one of whom brings home any lambs that are dropped on the run. In the morning the lambs that have been born during the night have to be collected, and the difficulty is to know to which mothers they belong; however, after a little sulkiness on the part of the ewe, she generally takes the one given to her. It is very curious the way a motherless lamb is foisted on a ewe whose own lamb is dead. Having skinned the defunct lamb, its skin is sewn on the one you wish to substitute, and after a little natural suspicion and smelling, the poor old thing welcomes it as her lost one. The ewes and lambs are kept apart from the dropping flock, being allowed to wander

Digitized by Google

about close at hand until the little ones gain strength, when they attempt longer flights. They are very active, and can follow their mothers anywhere in a couple of days. The whole business is one requiring great care and good skilful men; any outburst of passion, such as a man dogging the ewes, causing the owner great loss. By far the best plan is to offer a reward for the greatest percentage of a month old, at each station, and another for the shepherd whose flock is the most productive. This leads to emulation between the different stations, and care for his flock on the part of the shepherd. A good percentage is ninety-five, though I have seen as great as one hundred and five, but this was confined to one particular flock. Some ewes happening to lamb once out of the proper season, and when it would have been necessary to destroy the lambs, Lucy begged that she might have them to bring up by hand, and by means of a bottle filled with milk and the finger of a kid glove she succeeded admirably, and the affection they showed was most remarkable, following her wherever she went, each one answering to its own name. Indeed, one of them, a big fellow that we had named 'General Bounce' from the way he used to bully the others, when about six months old, followed us out one morning as we were going to the cattle station, and finding we could not drive him back, I had to tie him up to a sapling with one of my saddle-straps until our return in the evening, when to our great astonishment we

Digitized by Google

found he had escaped the native dogs, a piece of good luck we had hardly dared to hope for.

At the beginning of the spring we have to turn our attention to shearing—an operation which varies greatly according to the capabilities of the station and the strength of its establishment. In every case, however, a wool-shed is essential, and as they are all on pretty much the same pattern, varying only in size, I will describe ours, which was accounted a good model, and by far the largest and most commodious in that part of the country.

It was a large quadrangular building, eighty feet by forty, very lofty, roofed with galvanised iron, and at both ends left partially open. The floor was slabbed, and a bulkhead ran across the building, dividing it into two parts, one of which was intended for sheep, and would, when full, hold four hundred. Opening into this was a smaller enclosure, holding the sheep for ready use, which was always kept filled up from the larger, so that a shearer could lay his hand at once on a sheep without having to lose time by chasing it. On either side of this was a shearing floor, the sides of the building abreast of each man being pierced with port-holes, similar to those of a ship, through which, as soon as a man had sheared it, he turned out his sheep into a small space, which was hurdled off for each opening, and thus every man having a port to himself, it could be known exactly how many sheep he had sheared, and all disputes were avoided. I do not remember ever

Digitized by Google

seeing this plan adopted before, but it worked most admirably, for in other sheds where all the shorn sheep were turned into one yard, quarrels were frequent, a bullying fellow trying to claim more than he had really done, or as it is colonially called, 'bouncing.'

The shearers are of that mysterious class of men who only turn up when they are wanted. They are of all trades and occupations which they pursue till the shearing season commences, when they form themselves into gangs, and travel about from station to station during its continuance, disappearing at its termination like the swallows in England. They are always well-mounted, and indeed in every way are gentlemen accustomed to travel in comfort. They are attended throughout their rambles by their cook, and I have even known a cart of grog to form part of their train. Payment is made at so much a score, according to agreement. In our part of the country it averaged from 4*s.* 3*d.* to 4*s.* 6*d.* taken all round, but occasionally a special clause was inserted to pay more for rams. An expert hand will shear from four to four and a half score daily. I have seen one man who could do as many as six score; but about four, rather under than over, represents the average total of each at the close of the day. They have to find their own rag-stone and oil, but the squatter supplies them with a pair of shears in the first instance, and should these not be to their taste provides them with another pair at their own cost. The squatter also finds their rations, and as they

Digitized by Google

are for the most part persons whose appetite requires little tempting, the supply of food generally forms a heavy item in the shearing account. However, it is usually found expedient to let them feed themselves into that state of amiability and philanthropy which attends repletion, and at our station and at some others, it used to be considered advisable to supply grog twice a day to the attainment of a like benevolent end. So much store indeed did a certain squatter of my acquaintance set on keeping his men in good humour, that I have even known him to hire a fiddler to play all day in the shed, whilst they were at work, and for aught I know, the dulcet strains may have worked wonders, and lent a poetry even to sheep-shearing. Music no doubt hath charms, but I must confess that a shearer's common habit is to work very hard, and to grumble the whole time he is about it. In rainy weather all shearing is perforce stopped, it being useless to shear a sheep wet, on account of packing the wool, so that on these occasions you have this gang on your hands, eating your substance and doing nothing. As a rule they are inveterate gamblers, going on until they have forestalled every halfpenny they are likely to earn during the season. A kind of rude justice prevails amongst them, and I should not envy the man who was caught cheating, or a horse-stealer if found in their ranks.

The process of shearing seems very simple and easy at first sight. The sheep to be shorn is dragged out of

Digitized by Google

the small yard mentioned above, and seated on its stern, being held in position between the operator's knees. He—always standing—bends over him and opens the throat from the fore legs to the under jaw, then rapidly round the neck, and from thence down the back, when, if properly done, the whole fleece falls off in one piece. Cutting is of frequent occurrence from the hurry the men are in to get on, and whenever this happens the shearer does not stop for an instant, but cries out 'Tar,' when, whoever is picking up the fleeces, rushes with a tarpot to the spot and dabs some on the cut place, to keep off the flies. Some men never get the better of this habit, but 'tomahawk' as badly after years of practice as when they first began. The poor things never betray the slightest feeling, nor attempt to struggle, though the pain must be most severe.

At one end of the small pen is a table eight feet by three, on which the fleeces are rolled. Directly a sheep is shorn you gather the fleece in your arms, run to this table, and with a peculiar jerk, which is soon acquired, fling it out quite open on the table with the woolly side up, you then double in the edges in a way impossible to describe, roll it up, and stack it at one end. Arthur and I used to take it in turns to attend the shed, and picking up and rolling for twelve shearers, besides rushing about with the tarpot, is just as much as you can possibly do, and most fatiguing on account of the constant stooping, not to mention

Digitized by Google

the filthy greasy condition the fleeces make you in, which baffles all description.

I do not know any work I ever attempted so hard as shearing. The stooping nearly broke my back, and after an afternoon of amateuring—in the course of which I only got through five sheep, and had to give a bottle of rum as my footing—I found the next morning I was quite unable to straighten myself, the pain being dreadful if I attempted it, though I could hardly help laughing at my folly in having been induced to try it. The wrists, too, become quite stiff and weary, at least mine did, and altogether I came to the conclusion that a man as long in the back as I am had better leave such amusement alone for the future. The shearers say that for the first day or two at the commencement of the season they are punished a good deal, but that it soon wears off.

At the entrance of the shed is placed the wool-press, which in our case was a hardwood box, exactly the size of a woolpack, that is to say, about two feet six inches square and five feet deep, one side being so constructed that it would fall out. Into this the pack, made of a rough sort of canvas or sacking, is placed, the mouth is nailed outside the press, and the presser having got inside, where only his head is visible, the rolled fleeces are handed to him and packed to a certain height, when he wedges them down with an iron instrument called a spade. He is also assisted by an enormous stone which he has

Digitized by Google

inside with him. It is difficult to describe, but when the pack is full, at which time it is called a bale, if pressed well you can make no impression on it, even with your foot, and it presents a hard unyielding surface, the pack apparently so strained that the wonder is how it holds together. Squatters are curious with regard to their presses, some getting machinery up at great expense; but I really don't know whether the advantage gained over the old spade-press is great enough to compensate for the trouble and outlay. One ingenious press I saw consisted of a heavy tree some fifty feet long, working in a hole morticed in another tree, thereby forming a lever, having an upright piece attached to it, working in the woolpack frame which was sunk in the ground. This rather primitive arrangement jammed the wool tight enough in all conscience, but was very unwieldy and cumbersome. The great object of packing so close is to save carriage through the country, for however well you may do it it is always repressed, or 'dumped,' as it is called, by hydraulic pressure on its arrival in port, the force being so great as to crush two bales into one.

In the description of shearing I have given there was no washing, the sheep being clipped with all the dirt in them that had accumulated since the year before, technically termed 'shearing in the grease;' but on stations where water and hands are abundant, and you are enabled to wash, the operation becomes far easier, cleaner, pleasanter, and more

Digitized by Google

profitable. On some of the large stations on the Darling Downs they have elaborate systems of hot and cold douches in vogue, so that the wool comes off beautifully white, and their carriage is reduced by at least two-thirds, which is about the amount a fleece loses in weight when the yoke and filth is taken out of it; but with the outside or newly-established squatter it is rarely possible to do this, however desirable it may be, want of water and the insufficiency of labour being the chief obstacle.

I am convinced that many squatters sell their wool at a disadvantage from not attending properly to the **sorting of the fleeces prior to pressing. Each description** of wool should be kept totally separate, by which I mean all maiden ewes' fleeces should be packed by themselves, all wethers', rams', and each denomination of sheep in the same manner, the contents of the bale being distinctly marked outside it for the information of the buyers. Where you have your wool all higgledy-piggledy, on the bale being opened a purchaser can see at a glance that it contains mixed fleeces, and is shy of bidding, for he does not know how it will run throughout; whereas by taking this simple precaution your brand becomes favourably known, and you will never experience the least difficulty in getting a fair price. Broken black or brown fleeces and scraps should also be made up into a bale by themselves, the whole being numbered and marked in good large characters.

Digitized by Google

We were now comfortably settled in our house, and if the mansion itself had but little pretension to architectural splendour, it was at least free from bad drainage, from gas and water rates, and divers other ills to which many houses of greater seeming dignity are heirs. It was our own castle, and we were very proud of it. A verandah, gated at each end in order to snub the too constant attentions of our pet lambs, communicated directly with an apartment which I will call our drawing-room; on the right as you entered was our own bed-room door, and facing you a passage with Arthur's room and a store-room on either side of it. Such was the full extent of our domicile. For furniture, we had in our sitting-room a sofa stuffed with bush hay and covered with blue blankets, a few cane-bottomed chairs, and a piece of upholstery peculiar to the bush, consisting of a sack hung between two poles, which, leaning against a wall, formed a seat of unrivalled luxury, and which bore the name of 'a squatter's delight.' But if most of our furniture was primitive there was a rocking-chair of so pretentious an appearance as to border on sheer ostentation, and a folding screen, too, bespattered all over with cuttings from the 'Illustrated London News,' in which you may be sure we took a proper pride, whilst against our walls, on which, amongst a heterogeneous collection of photographs, hung two proof prints, relics of Arthur's University days, representing the Temptation and Fall. If windows let in light, they also let

Digitized by Google

in sun and flies, so we determined to forego all three, and had, therefore, no windows to our house. A wooden shed without windows may not seem to be a very desirable residence, but in this wooden shed Lucy, Arthur, and I were very comfortable nevertheless, and spent such happy days amongst our uncouth Penates, as only good health, light hearts, and hard work, aided by mutual affection, can give. We often had some passers-by, of whom there were plenty, into our hut for the evening to play a rubber, on these reception nights so far making a concession to polite life as to wear coats in honour of Lucy. We had Lieut.-Colonel B.'s book on whist, which we studied with such assiduity, that after the first round each knew exactly what the others had in their hands, which, to say the least of it, rendered the game simple, and caused us many a laugh. Such a sprinkling of men we used to have congregated in the hut of an evening, naval, military, University men, and once or twice a clergyman. In Australia it is impossible to judge a man by his dress: a dirty seedy-looking fellow you find slouching along the road will answer, when spoken to, in that inimitable tone so inseparable from high breeding, which never becomes extinct despite the colonial jargon or slang, which everyone more or less imbibes. In nearly all cases, I may say in every case, of a gentleman sinking into obscurity in Australia, drink is at the root of it—it is the curse of the place; and I have always observed

Digitized by Google

that when a man 'who has seen better days,' as the phrase is, commences to go down hill, he reaches the bottom sooner than anyone. Once let the demon of drink break down the barrier of self-respect, and he is lost. 'Facilis descensus Averni' is nowhere better exemplified.

I mentioned that now and then we met a clergyman, but it was very rarely, and then they were seldom Church of England, all other denominations being more energetic. As a rule they are not good bushmen. I recollect hearing of a parson newly settled in the bush, who with his wife sallied forth in a buggy soon after their arrival in order to explore the immediate vicinity of their property, and, like Dr. Syntax, to admire its picturesque points. Whether they were so wrapped in the contemplation of the scenery as to be heedless of the tracks and signs which marked their way, or how otherwise it was I don't know, but the story goes that the parson with the partner of his wanderings got lost, and became for four days objects of intense anxiety to such friends as knew of their absence, and who naturally conjectured they were either starving in the bush or satisfying the cravings of the blacks. At the end of that time, however, their reverend friend and his wife appeared again amongst them, by no means emaciated, but to their great surprise more fat and well-liking than when they had left; and, if the story be true, it is a compliment to Mr. Thorley—to whom the pair would be worth a fortune—for entirely to the

Digitized by Google

consumption of his valuable food for cattle (taken for the use of the horse) they owed their safety and good condition. I cannot vouch for the truth of the story; but Lucy, Arthur, and I used, after work, to have many a pleasant ride in our neighbourhood, returning in safety without Mr. Thorley's aid; and our rides too were much enlivened by an occasional run after a kangaroo or an emu. Our dogs were more numerous than select, in truth, it was a very mixed pack, the kangaroo dog, a kind of large greyhound, predominating, a somewhat uninteresting beast, very ready to follow you at first starting, but tailing off home again soon enough if no game be speedily found. I don't know whether all the greyhound species are the same, but these brutes were just as fond of a stranger as of their master; and, if a traveller rode past you, would as likely as not turn round and follow him unless flogged off; consequently we always had half-a-dozen that did not belong to us, and our own were scattered about all the surrounding stations. We were obliged eventually to destroy them all, for they used to loaf into the bush for days after the native dogs. A run after either the latter or a kangaroo is very good fun, more particularly if the country is open—in fact, in the neighbourhood of Brisbane and other large towns where they have packs, they run the dingoes as you do foxes at home.

The general appearance of the native dog or dingo much resembles the fox, or perhaps a cross between it

Digitized by Google

and the wolf, for they are between the two in size, varying in colour from yellow or almost white to black, though the latter hue is rare. Red, I think, predominates, and the ears pricked forward give a resemblance to the fox, though there is a sad falling off in the brush, the dingo's being a mangy affair. They are the abomination of all squatters, on whom they inflict serious losses annually, for though they are too cowardly to attack a flock by day, yet at night they often manage to break into the yards, when they do not content themselves with one sheep, but will worry dozens for the mere pleasure of it, and we found that a sheep thus injured, even though hardly scratched, rarely recovered, terror seeming to give what doctors in a railway accident compensation case call a 'shock to the system.' If the shepherd is a light sleeper, the noise of the flock rushing would awake him, for even before the dog effects an entry they are conscious of his proximity, and rush to the opposite side of the yard, huddling together in abject terror. We used to destroy a great number by poison, giving a quarter of a pound of tobacco as a reward for every tail brought in. The best bait is a piece of fat—handled with a glove on, for they are very keen-scented and suspicious—and a small quantity of strychnine put into an incision made in it, the whole being then wrapped in paper, and placed anywhere in the bush, covered with a bit of bark, a few leaves, or anything to prevent the birds disturbing it; the shepherd or whoever lays

Digitized by Google

them should, however, be careful to pick up the untouched pieces at daylight, or his own dogs will most likely come to grief. The action of the poison seems conducive to thirst, for the body is always found near a water hole, sometimes with the head immersed as if death had overtaken them whilst drinking. With us they were unfortunately so plentiful that no difficulty was experienced in finding one if wanted for a run, and when the dogs are laid on them they go pretty straight, but with a shambling gait like a wolf, very unlike the free stride of 'pug.' The animal in all its habits reminded me most strongly of the Mexican 'coyote.'

The kangaroo is so well known in England that it would be lost time to describe him. When hunted they make tremendous bounds, covering a great space and going at an immense pace, though from the slowness of their movements they seem taking it very easily. They invariably make for water if hard pushed, coming to bay in it, and drowning any unwary dog without mercy by clasping it in their short forepaws, and holding it under. A blow on the head kills them at once. If so pressed as to be unable to reach water, they will make a stand with their backs against a tree, catching any rash dog in the same manner, and inflicting a most fearful wound with the centre claw of the hind foot. You rarely see a good dog that has not one or more ghastly scars, reminiscences of an unwary puppyhood. The head is graceful as a deer's, and the large

Digitized by Google

mild eye, imploring in its mute agony, always made me loth to kill them, more particularly as the meat is never made use of. I believe in some parts the hams are cured, but I never tasted one, and when plainly cooked they are sinewy and far from agreeable. The tail is occasionally brought in and made into soup, but I never cared about it, though I have heard many people pronounce it an Epicurean dainty. I used always to strip and preserve the pelt, for it makes good and pretty door-mats, and is most useful for pouches, leggings, light whips, or any purpose where you require something strong and yet neater than green hide. I have seen saddles covered with it, and kangaroo-skin boots are very lasting and good.

We had two black boys with their gins, one of the latter being baby's nurse. Poor Kitty! she was an affectionate little thing, always in good humour, and would squat for hours before the child, amusing him by beating a piece of tin, or affording some other entertainment equally intellectual. Lucy made her a couple of long robes like nightgowns, bound with red braid, and the look of pride she wore for the first few days after she got them, and the way she would pass before the hut to show herself off if there were any strangers there, was most ludicrous. Her raiment hitherto had been a man's old cast-off shirt, for the ladies and gentlemen of the wilds are by no means fastidious about their toilet, the aboriginal *Le Follet* being, I suppose, exceedingly poor in suggestion. They like

Digitized by Google

nothing better for wear than the simple black apparel with which nature has decked them. It is curious how almost impossible it is to reclaim them from their wild state. Judge Therry, in his interesting book on New South Wales and Victoria, tells us, how Benelong, a native chief of New Holland, after being educated in England was found on his return to be sufficiently civilised to be admitted as a guest at Governor Phillips' table, but that he soon afterwards became impatient of the restraints of polite life, flung aside the decorous garments which hampered his limbs, and, decked only in his opossum rug, resought his native wilds. It seems curious, no doubt, to us Britishers, who have no desire to walk abroad in our buff, or to attire ourselves as formerly only in a tight-fitting suit of woad, but the love of a wild life is inherent in a savage, and he whom nature intended not for the drawing-room but the forest, sees no indecorum in an attire conspicuous only for its absence. Poor Kitty! she was a good specimen of the race—never had her pipe out of her mouth, had not the slightest idea of right or wrong, and nothing could teach her—the moral nature seemed entirely absent. If Dick, her husband, had beaten her well—and a black beating his gin means half killing her—for doing anything, she had sufficient discretion not to do it again if he was near, but, like many people of better opportunities, had no sense of iniquity that was not discovered. Ideas of religion she had none; indeed, I

Digitized by Google

never met a black who had. They believe in a devil-devil, or avenging demon, but their perceptions are not very clear even on that point. Shower kindnesses on them for years, and they will desert you in a moment for a bottle—ay, or a glass of grog. Ingratitude is innate in them, and they drink in treachery from the breast. However, Kitty served our purpose most admirably, and, with constant looking after, would help to wash, sweep out, and scrub the house, and make herself very useful. She rode just as well as Dick, and in the same fashion, a side-saddle being hateful to her. 'That fellow budgeree along of white Mary,'[1] she would say, but nothing would induce her to trust herself in it. She knew all the horses by name, and would go and catch any particular one you wanted. Once she bolted, but we sent over to the cattle station for Dick, who soon picked up her track —I hardly think he was inspired by the god of love, for he had been in the habit of ill-treating her so much before we came up, that by mutual consent, and on the ground of incompatibility of disposition, the marriage was annulled, and the swain had comforted himself with a Miall gin he caught in the bush. By sundown we found her about twelve miles off, not knowing exactly where she was going, or why she went, but evidently having made up her mind to be well thrashed; indeed, I think we rather sank in her estimation for not allowing Dick to cudgel her; how-

[1] A good thing for an English lady.

Digitized by Google

ever, we put her on a spare horse, bare-backed, and galloped her into the head station; and she never gave us any further trouble until her death, which took place about a year afterwards, and under such peculiar circumstances that I shall relate them as tending to throw some light on the psychological construction of this extraordinary race, and showing that, utterly destitute of the faintest ray of religion, they are, nevertheless, so imbued with superstition as sometimes to fall victims to their own imaginations.

A party of native police came over from the adjoining run, where they had been stationed, and camped just outside our paddock, having with them a gin called 'Louey,' who was certainly the prettiest black I ever saw, and who Kitty claimed as her sister. What truth there was in this I don't know, for they are very vague with respect to relationship; there was certainly a great likeness between them, though compared to Kitty, Louey was beautiful. The latter, poor thing, had been recently confined; and, when she was brought over to us, it was evident she was sinking fast, and beyond the aid of our bush remedies. Her sufferings were much augmented by the brutal treatment of the troopers, who would hardly approach her. Tossing her a piece of half-cooked meat and a pannikin of water, they would leave the poor thing all day in the broiling sun, on one occasion lighting her fire so near her that, being too weak to move, she was severely burnt. I need scarcely say that we knew

Digitized by Google

nothing of this at the time, but afterwards, from some words that Kitty let drop, we were induced to go to the camp, and found her lying deserted in the glaring sun, evidently dying fast. Nothing would induce Kitty to stay with her; we sent her with milk and little delicacies, but she threw them down by her sister's side, and rushed back again. I know these details are most unpleasant, but I am tempted to enter at length into the subject, my apology being that the race is but little known, and thinking that anything that may explain their peculiar habits and customs will be interesting. Towards sundown of the next day, Louey having expressed a wish for some hard-boiled eggs, my wife sent Kitty with some to her, and in a few minutes we saw her sauntering back, eating the eggs herself. On nearing us, she said, 'Sister belonging to me gone bong,' and coolly went on eating, without a trace of sorrow or feeling. This was more than the old Scotchwoman in the kitchen, who had heard her, could stand, and she rushed out saying, 'Oh, Kitty, you wicked girl, you too will die soon for being so cruel.' She stared for a minute, as if not grasping the words, then her hands fell, the eggs, released from the unstrung fingers, dropped on the ground, the ghastly colour peculiar to blacks when under emotional feelings came over her face, and, though we tried to rally her, and the poor woman was in despair at the effect of the words, it was to no purpose, she pined and pined, and in less than a month

Digitized by Google

I dug her grave beside her sister's. The night that poor Louey died the troopers betrayed the most extraordinary fear of her ghost. They sat huddled round their fire all night, not daring to sleep, and every now and then one of them would gaze earnestly out into the darkness, and perhaps say, 'Mine see,' when they would all rush pell-mell into the head station, perfectly terror-stricken. One of them was a very fat fellow, called Pompey, though whether that noble Roman required Mr. Banting's aid I don't know, and his abject misery, when he found he was last in the stampede, was most ludicrous. When they got to the kitchen they threw themselves flat down, and in a few minutes would begin to laugh, and then creep back in a body, but within half an hour there would be another panic. Poor Pompey's robust frame was not equal to such constant athletics. After two or three runs he resigned the perilous watch, and, bringing his blanket, curled himself up by the kitchen fire. I think these instances prove that the blacks are highly superstitious, and must believe in a kind of witchcraft, though they never mention it, and I know of nothing corresponding to the African Obi man, but Kitty evidently thought she was under the influence of the Mal'occhio, and that white Mary's spell was thrown over her, proving that belief by succumbing to it, for at the time of her sister's death she was perfectly well and happy. I leave other people to draw their own deductions from this, I believe, hitherto unnoticed

Digitized by Google

trait in the character of the aboriginals, premising that it cannot be peculiar to any one tribe, for the troopers are drawn from all parts of the continent, there rarely being two from one place in a detachment.

Having mentioned the native police, it will not be amiss to give some account of this most useful body of men. It being found that the settlers were utterly unable to resist the depredations of the blacks, from their inferiority in tracking, and the celerity with which the marauders moved into fastnesses inaccessible to horses after their deeds of slaughter, it was determined to try the experiment of enrolling a certain number of the blacks themselves to keep their sable brethren in order. The men were to be drilled, dressed in a suitable uniform, and mounted, and each detachment placed under the command of an English lieutenant, or, as he is now styled, inspector.

For this purpose a central head-quarters was established under a commandant near Rockhampton, where commodious barracks were built, and young officers and men thoroughly trained before starting for their various destinations up country.

The force was not established without much opposition, a great outcry against it being raised by people who, though making their fortunes out of wool and other station produce consigned to them, did not care one atom how many poor shepherds were murdered. The ground they took was, the inhumanity of teaching these uneducated savages to destroy their kinsmen,

Digitized by Google

and the sin of whetting an already unappeasable appetite for blood.

Theoretically they were right. It does no doubt seem monstrous to teach a black to shoot down his friends; and a policy tending to extermination is of necessity frightfully revolting to the Christian mind. The Queensland government, however, had well considered this, and it was only in recognition of a pressing exigency that they consented to make use of so dangerous and uncompromising a weapon as a native force. Rightly or wrongly, government had adopted to itself the country, and in order to reap the profit had offered certain advantages to such settlers as would seek a career in its wilds. Its first duty, therefore, was to afford protection to the men who had accepted its bargain. Thinly scattered as these were over a vast country infested by an ever-hostile people, recognising no law other than that of might and violence, it was idle to trust for their protection to the mere influence of a criminal code, too complicated for the native understanding, and too cumbrous and dilatory to have a preventive tendency. It became, therefore, necessary to entrust a discretionary power, however dangerous, to an almost irresponsible force for the due maintenance of the safety of life and property; and as the whites are no match for the patient cunning of the natives, and in order that the operations of the force when called for should—to have their proper moral effect—be irresistible, it was deemed expedient by

Digitized by Google

government to avail themselves of that very cunning which would otherwise baffle them.

To this end, therefore, the native police were enrolled. It was, as I have said, a question of absolute necessity, a choice between the protection of the pastoral industry of the country, or the abandonment of that pursuit by the colonists; nay, further, it was a choice between the sons of Japhet and the sons of Cush, for they could not coexist.

Much as the question admitted of argument on either side, and deeply as the system may have been stained eventually with occasional most horrible excesses, there can be no doubt but that the adoption of the plan was the result of careful deliberation and searching enquiry, that it was sanctioned only in the earnest hope that its operation would be found of service, less in the punishment than the prevention of crime; that if a somewhat violent, it was, on the whole, a merciful alternative, and that the results have fully borne out the policy of the originators.

What importance the government attached to the object of the force being preventive and not penal, and their care to impress this on all officers and men connected with the native police, will be best understood by the following extracts from the regulations for their guidance, which I will curtail considerably, giving only the spirit of the rules.

After stating that 'It is impossible to give precise directions for the execution of every duty which the

Digitized by Google

force may be required to perform, or to anticipate every difficulty which its members may have to encounter,' it proceeds: 'In the performance of their duty they are distinctly to understand that their efforts should be principally directed to the *prevention* of crime, which will tend far more effectually towards the security of person and property than the *punishment* of those who have violated the laws; and the very best evidence that can be given of their efficiency will be the *absence of crime* in their districts.' Again: 'The blacks cannot be considered as men armed for illegal purposes, because their weapons are their principal means of obtaining food.' Again: 'It is the duty of the officers, at all times and opportunities, to disperse any large assembly of blacks without unnecessary violence; such meetings frequently lead to depredation and murder. . . . The officers will, therefore, see the necessity of teaching the Aborigines that no outrage or depredation shall be committed with impunity, but, on the contrary, that retributive justice shall speedily follow the commission of crime; nevertheless the officers will be careful in receiving reports against the blacks, as it frequently happens that mistakes are made as to the identity of aggressors.' And, lastly, 'The Commandant calls upon the officers for an active and zealous discharge of their duties, for upon their exertions and example mainly depends the efficiency of the force. The duties of the officers are never-ending; their presence is required everywhere;

Digitized by Google

and it is solely by their intelligence, unceasing vigilance, and watchful superintendence of the men, that the protection, which is the main object of the force, can be afforded. This can in no way be more effectually carried out than by the constant personal supervision of their different stations on the part of the lieutenants in command of divisions, and more than ordinary care in visiting and patrolling the haunts of the Aborigines by the officers in command of detachments.'

Now I am sure that the unbiassed reader will agree with me that the general tenor of these instructions is conciliatory in the extreme towards the blacks. Isolated instances of excessive rigour, and though mostly much exaggerated, these certainly do occur, are due to the fact that however well disciplined, on occasions of great excitement, his men are beyond the control of the officer, a fact which can only be deplored as one of the grave objections to a system that undoubtedly needs many apologies, however necessary its existence. It is a rash thing to rob a lioness of her whelps, or a tiger of his prey, but I doubt if either would be attended with more danger than interfering between the troopers and their foes when once their blood is up. Then is the only time the officer loses his control over them, for after following a track with unwearying skill and sagacity for perhaps days and days, they expect to reap the reward at the end. So inherent is their thirst for blood, that I know of several well authenticated instances of a trooper coming

Digitized by Google

up to his officer, rolling almost out of his saddle with laughter, and leading him up to a body, say, 'Marmy, that fellow brother belonging to me.' However, it is as well to draw a veil over the dark side of the picture: with some of evil, there is a preponderating amount of good in the system, and it will be a sorry day for the squatters when the force is abolished. Their powers of tracking are truly wonderful. I have seen them run a trail at a canter, when even by dismounting and kneeling down to examine I could barely make out a mark. A pebble turned over, a blade of grass pressed down, are unerring guides to them, and their powers of sight are prodigious; the slightest movement is detected, and a thin column of smoke denoting the presence of Mialls is seen at the distance of miles, when far beyond the range of European vision. It is entirely attributable to the native police that bush-ranging in this colony has made but small head. No scheme known by a white man could ever throw these bloodhounds off his trail. The bush order is, a blue shirt, forage cap with a red band round it, double barrelled carbine and pistols, handcuffs, blankets, hobbles, black belt, and necessaries. On going into action they prefer being on foot unless the country is very open: the horses are given in charge of one man, and all the rest strip, retaining only their belt with ammunition, and their forage caps, to know each other by. The dusky figures then glide into the scrub, every man following the path he fancies best, and it

Digitized by Google

is odd if within a few minutes the crack of a carbine does not tell you where one at least of the number is. They are capital riders, taking to a horse naturally, so different from the Kanakas or Polynesians, who hate the sight of one, and never can be induced to get into a saddle. In conclusion, I cannot refrain from telling one story about them. It seems that instructions were received from head-quarters that before firing the trooper was always to call to his foe to 'stop in the Queen's name.' A detachment having caught some blacks who had been committing depredations, a trooper shot one who had thrown his boomerang at him, and was observed by the officer in command to turn his horse after he had ridden a little distance, and return to the body; and on the officer riding up he said, 'My word, Marmy, close up mine been forgot say, "Stop in Queen's name!"' They are devoted to their officers and to grog, their pay is very good, and as they all have gins they lead a very jolly kind of life. The gins are captives of their bow and spear, and are brought home before their captor on his saddle. This seems the orthodox way of wooing the coy forest maidens, who easily get reconciled in a couple of days to their change of state; at the end of a month freely giving any information they may possess regarding former or intended murders, and expressing the utmost willingness to lead the detachment against their tribe: a queer instance of inconstancy by which much mischief is prevented. All

Digitized by Google

blacks are cruel to their gins, at least what might seem so to forbearing and indulgent husbands, knocking them down with a waddy on the slightest provocation. They are, however, very fond of the piccaninnies, nursing and evidently taking great interest in them. The gins smear the little things over with powdered charcoal and grease (Horrid savages! I hear certain berouged ladies say), and when beautified to the mother's taste, a piccaninny of the first fashion very much resembles in tone the fire-grate of civilisation.

Bush fare is always pretty much the same; beef, beef, eternal beef, which after a while you become rather tired of. Potted salmon and sardines eke out the *menu*, but nobody need be without a change who chooses to take out their gun; game can always be found, and generally within a short distance. The truth is that most bushmen are too lazy to shoot, preferring the unvarying beef to the trouble. It may seem surprising that on a sheep station mutton should not enter into the bill of fare, but except for Christmas or when floods or any unforeseen accident prevent cattle being brought in, they are never killed. Sheep grow wool, cattle don't, is the principle; and for the same reason veal is unheard of, for if allowed to grow the calf becomes a bullock, when he is worth four times as much. In our part of the Kennedy District we found that vegetables were very capricious in their growth. Some years we got more pumpkins than we

Digitized by Google

knew what to do with, and then perhaps for two or three after not one would come to anything, the vine seeming blighted and withering away. The excessive heat was of course the cause, the earth being baked and cracking. Peach, pomegranate, and orange, and other fruit-trees, were brought up at much trouble and expense, and though the ground had been carefully prepared and they were well watered, they never flourished for any length of time. Even sweet potatoes, which, when they once get a footing in the ground, it is almost impossible to root out, never answered; in short, though it is true we reared a few tomatos and a kind of scarlet runner, called the poor man's bean, almost all gardening was a failure. One thing, however, grew despite our utmost endeavours to keep it down; this was 'pigweed,' and not being able to subdue it we turned it into salads, and most delicious they were; I know few things better than a salmon and pigweed salad, with plenty of cream and eggs. When boiled, however, it was not nearly so good. Another wild vegetable grew in the sandy beds of the rivers and creeks, called 'fat hen.' It was exactly like spinach, and not only most agreeable but also an excellent anti-scorbutic, a useful property, for scurvy is not an unknown thing in the bush by any means.

Meantime, plenty of game could always be obtained. In the creek, even in the paddock, you could always find water-fowl. The so-called black duck (*Anas superciliosa*) is of a dark brown colour, with coffee-

Digitized by Google

coloured head and neck, and beautiful purple speculum on the wings. It is a large bird for a duck, and is excellent eating. These were to be found within half a mile of the hut. Another kind also, the 'wood duck,' is a most beautiful bird, but, I think, more of a goose than a duck, the bill being shaped like the former bird, and they are found feeding on the bank; indeed, I have seen them eating the carcase of a dead beast. Both these ducks are easily crept up to, with ordinary precaution, and you may get several at a shot. The black duck is the swiftest flying bird I ever saw. I used to plant myself on the bank of the creek, and make Kitty beat up towards me, and they passed like a flash of lightning; you, however, soon get used to stopping them, even in full swing. Of course, when pot shooting, you crawl on them, and only when your bag is full can you indulge in perfecting yourself by flying shots. Strolling along the bed of the creek you meet a great variety, the nankeen crane (*Nycticorax caledonicus*), a very handsome, bright nankeen-coloured bird with three long white feathers at the back of the neck, very good eating; the plover (*Œdicnemus Grallarius*); the swamp pheasant (*Centropus Phasianus*), a pretty bird, but much smaller than its English relative, and having this peculiarity, that when put up, it will fly to the nearest tree and hop from the lowest bough to the highest by stages, so that you can always get a shot. You also meet numberless cockatoos and parrots, and different kinds

Digitized by Google

of water-fowl, as teal, shovellers, whistling ducks, poachards, &c. On the plains you find different kinds of pigeons, the squatters being most common—plump, dust-coloured little fellows, crouching down to the ground quite motionless when you pass. I have frequently killed them with my stock-whip. Another most beautiful pigeon is the 'bronze-wing,' which is nearly the size of the English wood-pigeon, and has a magnificent purply-bronze speculum on the wings; but the bird that repaid the sportsman best was the plain turkey or bustard (*Otis Australasianus*), a noble fellow, the male weighing from eighteen to twenty-five pounds. They differ from the European bird in being good flyers, going considerable distances on the wing, and high up in the air. The length of the wings is very great, and they look monsters in the air. There was an old lambing-station on the bank of the creek, where I generally found some, and by creeping along the bed, and up the side, I seldom missed getting one. It was surprising how little would kill so large a bird, for I have dropped them stone dead at over sixty yards with No. 6 shot. Should they be where you cannot approach them under cover, it is useless to attempt it should you be on foot; if mounted, and your horse will stand fire, you may make sure of one by riding round and round in a circle, gradually closing in upon them. Another plan is to dismount and lead your horse, keeping him between you and the birds, and by this means you

Digitized by Google

can get within easy range. They will also let a dray come close to them; and I once saw John Knox shoot three out of a cart in the paddock. I found a light pea-rifle with a hair trigger a good weapon for them, for they would let you blaze away until you killed them, only giving a stupid little jump in the air when the bullet whistled near them. Ibis, both brown and white, used to visit us occasionally; they required careful stalking to get a shot, but quite repaid the pains taken. Emus (*Dromaius Novæ Hollandiæ*) were tolerably plentiful, but as it is much better fun riding them down with dogs, we never shot them. It is a large bird resembling the ostrich, but of a uniform brownish black colour, with feathery hairs in place of feathers, and no wings. They run at a tremendous pace, taking a fast horse and dogs to catch them, and, when pressed, kick most viciously, often killing the dogs. I recollect we caught five young ones once, which we brought up for a time, but they eventually made their escape. They were beautiful little things, of a yellowish hue, with black longitudinal stripes down the back and sides. The stone enclosure in which we kept them was knocked down by accident one night, and the next morning they were all away. I have often seen them tame; and on a station they become a horrid nuisance, always chasing the horses, and when they are being driven into the yard in the morning, standing in the middle of the slip-rail panel, and causing them to break in all directions instead of

Digitized by Google

entering. They are dangerous sometimes; for at Wilton, where they had two, they knocked the governess down, and trampled on and kicked her most severely. Their only note is a deep drumming noise, which, though the bird may be close to you, sounds a long way off. The eggs are smaller than an ostrich's, of a deep olive colour, and are exceedingly handsome when set in silver as drinking-cups. The nest consists of a hole scraped in the ground, and is always approached by the old birds in a circular direction. At the distance of fifty yards they commence winding round, drawing in by degrees until they reach it. They always reminded me of gins—their expression is exactly the same as that of dozens of native women I have seen. The scrub turkey (*Talegalla Lathami*) is a most curious bird; its habitat is in the thickest scrubs, and it is difficult to get at. In appearance it much resembles the English hen turkey, though but little larger than a fowl. The most extraordinary thing connected with them is their nest, which is a circular mound of earth from three to four feet in height, and ten to fifteen feet in diameter. This must be the head-quarters of a whole colony, for, large as it seems, the mound at certain seasons is full of eggs. These are of an enormous size compared to the bird, are covered carefully over with sand, and hatched, as I suppose, by heat; though in the dense scrubs in northern Queensland, where I have found the nests, not one ray of sun could have penetrated to them.

Digitized by Google

However hatched, it is impossible, without netting the whole mound, to catch the young ones, for, directly they burst the egg, with innate precocity they scrape their way out of the sand and disappear in the scrub like a flash of lightning. I think little is known of their habits, for I believe they do not breed in confinement; but I was singularly lucky in stumbling across a nest once, whilst wandering through the scrub in search of a particular butterfly. Having nothing particular to do, I sat down and watched it, and saw four or five of the little things come wriggling out and dive into the scrub, being lost to sight in an instant. Although I remained there at least three hours, and perfectly motionless, I saw no sign of the old birds, so I imagine the little things must have instinct enough to cater for themselves. It is a rare day for the black boys or troopers when they find a nest with eggs in, for they eat them greedily. They are to be met with in confinement at several places, being also called the 'lowan' or 'native hen,' and I should think if they could be domesticated would be a valuable addition to the poultry-yard, for the flesh is very delicate and good. From the foregoing list the reader will see that there is no reason you should not fare well if you only take the trouble; but still the heat is so intense that shooting becomes very irksome, particularly as the swarms of flies spoil everything. I have often hung birds up, and, on returning in a couple of hours, have found them literally alive and

Digitized by Google

covered with ants. If put into a bag, they go in the same way. The only method I know to preserve them is to have a gin or two with you, and make them take the birds at once into the head station, where they should be par-baked, when they will keep until the next day. Up country it is necessary to economise your shot, and thus you are often obliged to let birds go, fearing you may be throwing a charge away. This was one reason why I preferred a rifle for the turkeys, for I could cast my own bullets. The best gun to have is a strong, pretty heavy double-barrel, the stock as plain as possible, but the tubes as good as money will get. The first six years I was in Australia I always shot with a muzzle-loader, taking to a breech-loader latterly. I suppose it was habit, but I could kill as well again with my old friend as I could with the new. I think with the latter, which was a central-fire, I always shot ahead. As you are often in a place where you cannot get cartridges, and great quickness of loading is hardly requisite, I think I should decide in favour of the old muzzle-loader for shooting, though there is nothing like a breech-loader for defence against the blacks. Always have your gun sufficiently strong to carry balls, and, as you frequently put in very heavy charges with tallow cartridges, it should be able to stand the strain of firing these. Were I ordering a gun for Australia, I would ask for a gamekeeper's gun, bore No. 10 or 12, weight from 8½ to 9 lbs., giving particular directions that it

Digitized by Google

should be as plain as possible, being wanted for work and not for show. One advantage of a breech-loader is the ease with which you can wipe it out, should it foul whilst in use. Our shepherds were armed with Terry's breech-loaders, which are most excellent weapons, and have a great range. I once saw a curious instance of a ball not penetrating at a short distance. A bullock had to be killed, and was in a small yard, against the rail of which four of us were leaning, watching whilst Arthur shot him. He aimed full at his forehead, the muzzle of the Terry not being more than two feet off; but though the beast dropped for a moment, the bullet had rebounded from his skull and struck the rail, and we picked it up afterwards quite flattened. Had it not struck the rail, it must have killed S., who was leaning over at that place. This was a heavy conical bullet, with a full charge of powder. On loading again, and firing with the same charge, but at a distance of four yards, we found the ball embedded in the back part of the neck, having torn its way through skull and flesh to that distance, so great was its penetration. As a gun or carbine is cumbersome on horseback, and it is always requisite to carry some weapon, for you never can tell what may happen, recourse is usually had to a revolver. I have tried all kinds, giving the palm without hesitation to Tranter's double-trigger pistols. I believe they are made breech-loading now. Though the two triggers may

Digitized by Google

be a little puzzling at first, yet the use of them is soon attained; they are perfectly safe, no accident can fire them; and last, but not least, they are always ready for action, none of those abominable safety-catches being required, which a man, under the influence of strong excitement, forgetting to unlatch, in more than one case has paid forfeit with his life. Lastly, let nothing persuade you to strap your pistol on your saddle, or anywhere except on your own person. Your horse shies suddenly at a wallaby jumping up under his nose, throws you, and gallops off home, leaving you miles off, perfectly safe if your pistol is by your side, but unarmed and anxious if it is with your horse.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER V.

BUSH INCIDENTS.

ABOUT a year after our arrival at Mount M'Donnell, whilst at tea one evening, the superintendent of an adjacent station, who had just come up from Bowen, mentioned that a rumour was prevalent when he left, to the effect that an officer of the native mounted police had been murdered by the blacks amongst the Dawson scrubs, and his detachment cut to pieces. Of Lucy's three brothers two were in the police, but I hardly think we any of us took much notice of it, false reports were so rife, and wherever news is bad, it gains in strength as it rolls. However, before going to bed I questioned Willie St. G., who told me that my brother-in-law Cecil was the supposed victim, but beyond that knew nothing. I was in great distress, for it would be more than a fortnight before any authentic account could reach us, and I feared some passer-by would unwittingly talk about it, so I determined to take poor Lucy to the cattle station, where, being off the main road, there would be less likelihood of the rumour reaching her. It was hard work keeping up a

Digitized by Google

smiling exterior with such a load on my breast, but she never suspected anything, and at the end of the fortnight the mail arrived fully confirming the sad intelligence.

It appeared that the blacks had been doing a great deal of mischief on the Dawson runs, spearing cattle, driving away sheep, and mustering in such numbers as even to threaten the stations. In this they were much assisted by the nature of the country, which consisted of dense and almost impenetrable scrubs, through which no horse could be pushed, into which the blacks could retreat when pursued, and almost bid defiance to an inimical force. They usually assemble in great numbers once a year to fight and dance—corroborry as it is called—at which time also take place the rites of initiating the young warriors who have attained the age of manhood, and sundry other mystic ceremonies which, to the best of my belief, have never been witnessed by a European. In nearly every case these gatherings end in murder, the principal inciters being the old gins, who inflame the newly-recognised young men. Poor Cis was sent on this his first and last expedition with a detachment of four troopers, and on arriving at the station which had requested protection, the superintendent, Mr. J., offered to show him where the blacks were. Accompanied by him, Cis rode into the scrub, and finding an open place, and it being then dusk, he camped there, letting the troopers go to sleep, he and Mr. J. agreeing to take watch

Digitized by Google

and watch throughout the night. About midnight it commenced to rain, and became very dark; shortly afterwards came a shower of spears from every direction, accompanied by hideous yells, a rush of dark bodies, the sickening sound of bone smashing under the blows of the nullah-nullahs, and then all was silent as before. J. recovered himself after, he supposes, about half an hour; his right arm hung useless by his side, and his scalp hanging over his eyes nearly blinded him. Poor Cis must have died without any pain, three spears were completely through him, and to make sure of their bloody work, the blacks had beaten in his head like an eggshell. One trooper dead; another so dreadfully speared and cut about that it seemed to be almost a mercy to put him out of his misery; the other two not to be seen. In another moment J. heard the crack of a carbine in the darkness, mingled with the yells of the blacks, and followed quickly by three more barrels, then all still again. He described his feelings to me as being so dreadful that he feared that the brain-cords would burst, and that he would become insane. The weather was fine now, even fitful glimpses of the moon shining down on the bodies, and on the mutilated trooper writhing in his great agony; but, though the dying light of the fire showed his form in bold relief, a mark for further spears, the pain of his own wounds, and the giddiness from loss of blood, prevented his moving and caused him to drop again, when, like a sail to the ship-

Digitized by Google

wrecked mariner, came the reports of the carbines. He managed to crawl to poor Cis's body, and taking his whistle, recalled the troopers, who, in a short time, made their appearance, one badly wounded; but, brave fellows as they were, having followed the blacks into the scrub, and made a good account of several of them. J. told me that, despite his own grief and pain, he was deeply touched at these poor savages wailing over the body of their officer. 'Baal we see fellow like it this again, mine Marmy bong, oh warra wurra yurra burra,' &c., &c. At daylight Peter, the only sound man amongst them, caught a horse, and J. rode into the station for assistance. A cart was sent out for the bodies, the graves being dug in the interim; the wounded men were looked to—strange to say, the poor fellow who was almost cut to pieces recovered; and before sundown poor Cis and his trooper were buried side by side, and the sweet wattle-scented air blows gently over as good a gentleman and Christian as ever fell in the execution of his duty, and of as faithful a black boy as ever sat in pigskin.

The next few weeks passed gloomily enough, for poor Cis was a favourite brother, but I will not trouble the reader with our sorrows. Willie, Lucy's other brother, who had been in the police, had been offered the superintendence of a large sheep station only one hundred and thirty miles from us, which he had accepted, quitting the force, and I thought if I could induce him to come over and visit us, it might

Digitized by Google

cheer my poor little wife up, so I determined to ride to him, and bring him back with me. The ride had nothing of particular interest in it, beyond showing the bottom and endurance of our grass-fed horses. I am a heavy man, and weighed at that time over twelve stone, my saddle, saddle-cloths, blanket, revolver, &c., must have brought me up to over fifteen stone. My horse was a flea-bitten gray, about fourteen and a half hands high, with a good dash of Arab in him; he had never tasted corn or anything better than he could pick up in the paddock, and had only just recovered from a fistula on the wither, which I had been doctoring for months, yet this little beast carried me the whole distance, one hundred and thirty miles, in under forty-eight hours, over most horrible country, and the journey much lengthened by my having to drive two other horses before me. We did not leave Mount M'Donnell until ten o'clock, my companion being an Upper Burdekin squatter, and the horses we were driving belonging to him. Nine that night found us at C.'s station, fifty miles, when our horses were only washed down, hobbled, and left to shift for themselves. The next evening saw us at Burdekin plains, sixty-two miles as the crow flies, and I reached Reedy Lake, where Willie was, by breakfast the next morning, about twenty miles further on. On hanging my horse up outside, one of the men asked for the loan of him to run their horses up with, when 'Nonsuch' bucked him off, proving that the two pre-

Digitized by Google

ceding days' hard journey had not done him much harm. I doubt if an English corn-fed horse would have done as much, certainly not over the kind of country we traversed, and only shod on the fore feet. I was very unlucky on my return with Willie some four days afterwards, when I rode a large roan horse that had strayed or been stolen from Mount M'Donnell, and was so fat it could only go slowly, so I made the journey three instead of two days, going only forty miles the first, but he sank under me in the bed of a river I was crossing on the second day, and I had to leave him there, shifting my saddle to my own horse which I had been driving. A month afterwards I heard he was dead in the place where I had left him, killed by over fat. It was a valuable horse, and I was much annoyed about it.

I mentioned C.'s station, at which I stopped a night both going and returning, and found a most hearty welcome from the two brothers, the eldest, Marmaduke, being a married man, and Mrs. C. doing the honours of her neat little house in a way that did one's heart good. I was surprised at the great neatness and order in which everything was kept, for, with the exception of one black boy and a maidservant, they were alone. The house, in place of the usual slabs, was built of whole she-oak trees, plenty of which grew in the creek adjoining, the inside of the drawing-room being most tastefully lined with light-blue linen, forming a canopy, and keeping the rough

Digitized by Google

sides and roof out of sight. They had only cattle on their run, and, with the assistance of their boy, the two brothers were quite sufficient to look after them, and, thus doing all their improvements themselves, and having no wages to pay, they were getting on most admirably. I had often heard of their house having been stuck up by the blacks, and of the courage Mrs. C. had shown. I therefore did not fail to ask her to give me an account of it, which she most unaffectedly did, not giving herself half the credit due to her. I transcribe her story as letting English ladies know some of the perils to which their sisters are exposed in the course of a bush life.

'For some time,' said Mrs. C., 'we had heard the blacks cooeying about the run, and when Sampson, our black boy, came in at night, he used to say how many tracks he had seen; but, as they did not seem to disturb the cattle, neither my husband nor Monty' (Montague C., the brother) 'would interfere with them. I did not feel the least uneasy, for one of them always stayed at home with me, and, to tell you the truth, I never dreamt of such a thing as an attack; I had not at that time as much experience as has been forced upon me now. One morning my husband and Sampson had gone out at daylight on to the run for some cattle business they had in hand, and I had got up about six, and seen that Sarah (the maidservant) had commenced washing, after which I went into my bedroom to dress. Monty had finished milking, and,

Digitized by Google

after leaving the pails in the kitchen, had gone down to the creek to bring up some more water for Sarah. You know the creek, you crossed it last night, and must have observed how steep the banks are. Well, soon after he had gone I heard a shout, and saw Monty rushing towards the house, with a whole mob of blacks yelling at his heels. You may imagine what my feelings were, Mr. Eden. My poor little baby was my first care, but, luckily, I had no time to think; I screamed out to Sarah, who did not answer; and just as Monty reached the door, and slammed it to behind him, a shower of spears came hurtling against it, one of which grazed his forehead. He put his back against it, whilst I searched for the bar, but, as is always the case, it was not to be found, and baby and the guns being in my bedroom, we in a few hurried words agreed to make our stand there. I went in first, and then Monty followed me; the door, which had a wooden latch to it, luckily opened inwards, and against it we dragged the bed, chest of drawers, and everything movable. Now came the severest trial; only one gun was loaded, and no powder could we find anywhere. We knew it was in the room, but in our hurry we could not lay our hands on it anyhow. Monty would not fire the only charge; had they broken in it would have been wanted for another purpose' (and I knew from the little woman's voice what she meant, and thought, God protect all poor white women in this country! better a man should keep his last shot for that purpose than

Digitized by Google

suffer one he loved to fall into the hands of these fiends). 'They had by this time found the openings between the slabs — you know this house was not built then—and poked through at us with their spears, wounding poor Monty in the foot, and touching my wrist whilst I tried to ward the points off baby's cradle. Suddenly Monty turned quite pale, though he would not tell me why; but I saw he had heard something, and in a minute or two I heard the sound of sticks falling on the thatched roof. All this time with one hand I was feeling in a box half filled with odds and ends, and, just as a dull haze seemed coming before my eyes, my hand struck against something smooth. That was the time of greatest excitement. I hardly dared to look—could it be? yes it was, thank God!—thank God again and again, it *was* the powder! Bullets and caps we had plenty, and in a minute I had loaded the guns and handed one to Monty; he fired through the slabs right amongst them, when, with a yell, they rushed out of the drawing-room. Monty dragged away the barricade, flung open the door, and fired three more barrels where they stood thickest, when they broke and ran; and at the same time I heard the crack of a stock-whip—the sweetest music, Mr. Eden, that ever fell on my ears—and in a minute more my husband and Sampson came galloping up. Water, water! was the first cry, for the thatch was smouldering from the firesticks they had thrown on it. A few minutes allayed all danger in that quarter; Sarah re-

Digitized by Google

appeared from the gully, where she had hidden herself; we got things settled by sundown; and, though we had our wash spoiled, yet we were not much the worse.'

'Now,' said Monty C., who had been quietly listening, 'let me tell you, Eden, what she never will. Ask her why she wears that velvet band round her wrist. You won't answer? Well, I'll tell you. When she told you she warded the spears off that youngster, she never said that this poor little wrist'—here he took her hand—'was pierced completely through; that she never uttered sound, and never ceased looking for the powder; that, God bless her! it was owing to her pluck that we are sitting here now; that——' Here poor Monty's feelings got the better of him, for he rushed out into the darkness with a gulp between a sob and an oath on his lips, and we saw him no more for half an hour.

'We took it out of them, though,' said Marmaduke, 'we got them on to pretty open ground, where a horse could work well, and they took to the trees; it is bad work to look back upon, but our blood was up, and mercy would have led to another attack. They seem now to hold the place in such awe that they never venture within miles of it.'

About this time the stream of travellers set in so thick towards the Flinders that we could not keep the store supplied, so a man begged permission to build a public-house and store on the Suttor, some eight miles from us. This the Knoxes allowed him to do,

Digitized by Google

and accordingly up it went, a couple of quarter casks of rum and a few cases of bad Hollands, or Cape smoke, arrived, and the 'Westward Ho' was opened in all form, the ceremony consisting of the firing of many muskets and pistols, without much regard where the bullets went, and free drink served out for two days to all comers. I shall never forget a Flinders squatter who I heard was on his way down, and who I wanted to see in connection with some cattle of his, a hundred head or so, that were running about the Suttor, where they had no business to be. I knew he was somewhere in our neighbourhood, for several people had passed him; and at last the 'Westward Ho' struck me as being a likely place to find him, for, although I had never seen him, I knew from report he was what in Queensland is called 'a good drinking man,' and highly esteemed for that quality. On getting to the public I asked, 'Is Mr. L—— here?' 'Oh, yes, he's here all right; tie your horse up, and come and have a nobbler.' Which, being discussed, I again asked where he was. 'Why, there he is,' said mine host, pointing to a bundle rolled up in the corner, and which, on a closer inspection, I found to be a man with only a flannel shirt upon him, filthy beyond all description, and sleeping the sleep of deepest drunkenness, a stench of bad spirits arising from the heap enough to knock down a man fresh from the pure air. And this was L——, who I had come to see on business—this was the son of a clergyman, who was at

Digitized by Google

that moment praying for the reformation of the heap at my feet; for of the poor father and mother I knew something, and knew how from sunrise to sunrise they poured forth supplications for the well-being of their sons. I got buckets of water and soused him down; and, with the help of the landlord, who was not a bad fellow in the main, managed to dress him; and, having caught and saddled his horse, I, partly by persuasion, partly by force, induced him to mount—when once in the saddle he was as steady as a rock—and brought him in to the head station, where, having made him a bed, and given him a good stiff nightcap, I left him to sleep himself sober. The next morning not a trace of him could I see; at what time he left I don't know, but he had gone back on foot to the 'Westward Ho' during the night. Of course, I could do nothing further, except sending his horse to him; and, shortly afterwards, the landlord brought an order to deliver all L——'s cattle to him; so, in the three weeks he was there, hopelessly drunk, incapable even of eating or enjoying himself in any way, he not only drank away all his money, but the mob of cattle he had running there.

This is only one instance out of hundreds that I have observed, and I cannot think while men lead such an isolated and brutalising life as many of the outside squatters do, matters will ever be any better. Get grog they will, and it matters little to them whether the nearest public-house be ten or five hundred miles

Digitized by Google

away, they *will* reach it, and steep their brains in the fiery adulterations at whatever distance from them it may be placed. I take it an educated man begins to deteriorate as soon as he gets beyond the reach of ladies' society; carelessness in dress creeps gradually in, then greater license of tongue, whilst a yearning after any new face often causes a man to associate with a well-known blackguard rather than be alone. The whole *morale* of the man becomes lower in tone, and then few escape the grog shop which is yawning to receive them in its fatal embraces. Once taste the degrading pleasures of a debauch, and there is no remedy; the victim goes on and on, knocking down his cheque half yearly, sinking lower and lower, all that was ever good or noble in him withering and drying up under the curse, and he dies at last unknown, unregretted, and unmissed. This may seem a terrible picture, but, reader, it is underdrawn. There is a most erroneous opinion indulged in by many right-thinking people in England, that if a young man is wild and dissipated the knock-about life of the Colonies will bring him to his bearings, and that in a few years he will steady down. Never was such a fatal error. Any vice which is indulged even whilst under the restraint of a little self-respect will break out with tenfold violence in a land where there is no vestige of restraint, and where these things are barely looked upon as wrong; and remark that, even when thought badly of, it is not the sin itself that people the least object to, but the bar such a

Digitized by Google

propensity may be to worldly advancement. Looking upon it with any regard to the future is a thing undreamt of. If a man was to say in any town in Queensland that drunkenness was a sin, his audience would stare and not understand him: this light is new and unknown to them. But you will hear it said: 'A fine fellow So-and-so, takes his thirteen nobblers before breakfast. Will you liquor?'

I think the Government might do a great deal to prevent the adulteration of liquor, which is carried on to an extent unheard of in the mother country. The chief ingredients are tobacco juice and blue stone—can you imagine such stuff?—though what are the exact proportions of each required to make bushman's grog I hardly know. One instance I can vouch for. A man set up a public-house on the Flinders; he took up one quarter cask of rum, a half tierce of damaged tobacco, and how much bluestone I don't know, hardly enough, I should think, for he bought all we had to spare. Well, the whole country side flocked to him when he opened his shanty, and to my certain knowledge he made over one hundred and forty pounds out of that solitary quarter cask, the cost price of which, duty paid, was only eighteen pounds. I know this, for his partner—*more Queenslandi*—bolted with the money, and when he came to us to lay information against him, lo! *the cask wasn't finished even then!* Now if these grog shops are allowed, and the licenses are granted freely enough, for the Govern-

Digitized by Google

ment get thirty pounds for each, they surely might appoint an inspector, whose duty would be to visit these places *incog.*, and analyse the stuff they sell, suspending their license and fining heavily in all cases of hocussing. The healthiest man would wake athirst in the morning after two or three glasses of bluestone and tobacco juice with a dash of bad spirits of wine in it; and the state the poor fellows are in after a debauch of some days is most pitiable. If the brain was clouded with pure alcohol instead of this filthy concoction, the cases of so-called sunstroke would be far fewer.

At the beginning of every year you may expect the rainy season, and in Northern Queensland, when it does rain, it does so with a will. The breaking-up of the dry season is ushered in by increased heat, the aridity of the air being most remarkable, the hand feeling hot and dry, and quite devoid of moisture; distant lightning is observed for several nights, until at last, after a dead calm, so still as to be almost painful, the first air comes stealing along, bringing with it the indescribable sensation that heralds a downpour; nearer and nearer growls the thunder, stronger and stronger blows the wind, waving wildly to and fro the long straggling branches of the gum-trees and whistling shrilly through the thicker foliage of the tea-trees in the creek, until, with a deafening crash, the vault of heaven is opened and a torrent descends. Now the roof, shrunk by months of drought, lets in water like a sieve, and you are as thoroughly uncomfortable as it is

Digitized by Google

well possible to be; and by the next morning the bed of the creek, which was dry sand yesterday, has become a foaming yellow torrent, whirling down branches of trees and all the *débris* that has fallen since last year. Still the rain keeps on steadily, not quite so violently and with no wind; still the creek keeps rising, and now you begin to think how you will get rations over to the shepherds on the other side. But old Willie M. has prepared for all that, he has planted flour, tea, and sugar on the other side, and they must kill sheep. So the plucky old fellow plunges into the creek on his good nag 'Dandine,' and struggling over somehow goes as coolly about his work as if nothing had happened. In a fortnight the country has changed as if by magic: the blackened parched expanse that used to weary the eye has disappeared, being replaced by tender green grass; gradually the rain ceases; the sun shines out, bashfully at first, but day by day becoming more reassured; the creek, as if ashamed of its outbreak, dwindles gradually down to the becoming, unassuming little stream it should be. Everything looks fresh and sweet. The travellers that have been detained begin to arrive, and, in short, everybody looks happy and contented, for now there will be good feed, good water, and fine weather, and what more does a bushman want?

One of the peculiar features of the bush are the whirlwinds, which sweep along with a violent rotatory motion, the whole column simultaneously progressing.

Digitized by Google

They are, in fact, miniature cyclones, some hundred feet or less in diameter (indeed you see them no more than two feet), revolving with irresistible velocity, drawing everything within their influence into the vortex, and whirling branches of trees, leaves or the roof of your house if it lays in their path, high into the air, and stalking slowly along until they die away. I have seen a road of a mile in length and thirty yards in breadth cleared by one of these whirlwinds, as neatly as if the timber had been felled for the construction of a telegraph line. Though I often tried to get into a small one I never succeeded, perhaps all the better for myself. They can be seen at a great distance from the cloud or pillar of dust they raise, and seem to be most prevalent in sultry and calm weather. Sheep are much afraid of them, and will scatter recklessly to avoid one.

One of the most abominable nuisances in this country is the quantity of reptiles and stinging and biting pests with which it abounds. Rarely a day passed by that we did not see a snake, never a week that we did not kill one, in the hut, store, or some of the buildings, and generally it was venomous. Neither did there seem to be any rule as to where you might expect to find them, for on bare trodden ground, with no more cover than a billiard table, they turned up as frequently as in long grass. The whip-snakes were the fondest of the houses, coiling themselves in a wonderfully small space, and remaining quiet during

Digitized by Google

the day. The wall-plates were their favourite retreat, and many and many I have killed in the morning whilst taking a nap there. Arthur, who on one occasion was sleeping on a sofa in the hut, used his empty valise for a pillow, and felt something or other rattling about inside it during the night; and the same thing taking place again the next night he shook it, and out came a large black snake, which escaped before he could recover from his surprise. The following night he came again, when Arthur managed to get a blow at him, and knocked off an inch or so of his tail; but even this didn't satisfy him, for he presented himself the next night as usual, when Arthur shot him, for such attachment to his person was hardly pleasant. I don't believe for one moment that any snake will attack you, they are only too glad to get away if they can; yet when they are all about a house, the chances are that you tread on, catch hold of, or do something to annoy them, and I really think of all unsatisfactory modes of exit from this wicked world, death from snake-bite heads the list. Yet though escapes are of daily occurrence, very few accidents happen. I saw one poor fellow, a shepherd, who was bitten by a whip-snake. He came in to the station, arriving some three-quarters of an hour after he received the wound. We put on a tourniquet, opened the place, and let it bleed freely, giving him as much rum—our only spirit—as he could swallow, for it is a strange thing that if you can make the patient drunk he is saved; but it

Digitized by Google

was no use, he could *not* keep awake. Three of us walked him up and down, and even ran pins into him to prevent his dropping off, but all unavailingly; he died in three hours, seemingly without pain.

The most common species are as follows: whip-snakes, of all colours, from dirty brown to beautiful emerald green; black snakes, with a rose-coloured belly, very handsome; brown snakes, with a whitish head and neck, ranging from three to ten feet in length; little snakes, of a blackish hue, nine inches long, and no thicker than the stem of a churchwarden pipe, but so deadly that I saw a hen bitten by one turn round three or four times and drop lifeless; a most beautiful ringed snake, black and white alternately; and last, but not least, the death or deaf adder—for it is called by either name indifferently—which rarely exceeds eighteen inches to two feet in length, is very thick and stumpy, having a horny termination to the tail, and when touched doubles up, striking with both head and tail, and from the fact of its never getting out of the way, and invariably selecting a pathway to doze in, is by far the most dangerous. All these are venomous. The carpet-snake is the only harmless one I ever met. It sometimes attains a great size, is strictly nocturnal in its habits, and will do a good deal of mischief in a poultry yard. It is a constrictor, and you often find them in the bush gorged with a big wallaby that it seems a marvel how they got down. At Rockingham Bay I several times saw

Digitized by Google

very large snakes some way out at sea—pythons, I suppose—but never killed one.

Of other stinging pests there are centipedes and scorpions under every sheet of bark and in every rotten log, tarantulas in all outbuildings, and ants enough to satisfy the most determined entomologist. Kitty once came towards the house throwing something rapidly from one hand to the other, and grinning in high glee, her new plaything being a monster centipede she had discovered in the pocket of my riding breeches which she was about to wash. Poor Lucy was stung in the fleshy part of the thumb by a scorpion which was on her sponge, and suffered tortures, despite our opening the place and applying oatmeal poultices. The ants are over and into everything; nothing keeps them out, and I know of no way to destroy the nest. One large ant-bed was some fifty yards from the meat house, and the whole time of salting we used to have to do battle with legions of these insects. We tried digging up the bed, and kept a fire burning on it for days, but fruitlessly. The legs of the safe and tables always stood in sardine boxes filled with water. The whole bush teems with them, bulldogs, green ants, and heaven knows how many different kinds. The latter are tree-ants, and construct a most extraordinary looking nest, as large as a beaver hat, of leaves gummed together. Nothing can be left for more than a few days without being moved, or else the white ants would be foul of it, and their work is very

Digitized by Google

treacherous, for being always out of sight their presence is unsuspected. They construct little tunnels of clay; and it used to be good fun to break one of these open and transport a bulldog to the spot, when he would make his observations, hurry off and tell his friends, who would soon assemble and slay the unfortunate white ants as fast as they made their appearance. A number of hornets, much larger than the English variety, frequented our house, building clay cells against the wall, the shape of a *meringue*. It was most interesting to watch them come droning in with a lump of soft clay, larger than a pea, between their thighs, and to see the wonderful way they moulded it to the required shape. Strange to say, they seem to know the inhabitants of the house they build in, never attempting to sting even if driven away or their nests knocked down, which is an advantage, for one of these monsters would almost kill a child. Mosquitoes and sand-flies are another curse, driving men, horses, and cattle half wild. You see horses come galloping up to a fire and thrusting their heads into the smoke, and they will stand in couples, head and tail, so that they mutually keep insects off each other's heads. They always fall off in condition during the sand-fly season, never stopping to feed, but roaming about in vain endeavours to get rid of their tormenters. I have been told by police officers that they have frequently, when camped in scrubs, been obliged to light special fires for

Digitized by Google

the horses, who, poor things, would stop in the thick smoke all night. The ordinary flies are a perfect torment, always returning to the place from whence you drive them, until you become half a maniac. These, however, in the house we quite avoided by having no windows. During the summer every two men you meet out of three have either the sandy or swelling blight—a species of ophthalmia. The first is insufferable torture, the feeling being that of hot sharp grains of sand between the eye and eyelid. Sugar of lead, washing with green tea, and all sorts of things are recommended, but I found the only thing was to remain in a darkened room, wash frequently with warm water, and at sundown to sit with the feet in strong mustard and water, as hot as you can possibly bear it. This seems to draw the inflammation down a little, and may enable the sufferer to get an hour's sleep, for, strange to say, the pain is most intense at night. You may imagine my feelings at seeing my wife and child both affected with this scourge at the same time, and when I found that it was of yearly occurrence, I determined Lucy should not stay another summer, even if I had to do so, for what would recompense you for the loss of sight, the most precious of God's gifts? One man I knew had a remedy that he declared to be infallible, which was a wet bandage round the left wrist. I think there is some sense in it, as tending to draw the inflammation away, for I know from experience that poulticing the eyes themselves

Digitized by Google

makes bad much worse. Were I ever to suffer again from it, I should put leeches behind my ears—there are plenty in every water-hole, which you can catch by throwing in a newly-stripped sheepskin, or driving a dog in. Swelling blight is the work of flies coming off putrid carcases and settling in the corner of the eye. I could tell when I should have it, without fail, by feeling a queer little sensation, causing me to put my hand up and dislodge a fly, when as sure as possible in twenty minutes' time under whichever eye was poisoned would rise a lump, varying in size from a fives to a cricket ball; the eyebrow would keep it company until the two swellings nearly met, and the other eye, jealous of the superior magnitude of its neighbour, would do its best to rival it. It was no actual pain, but most disagreeable, and if you piqued yourself on your personal appearance, it was as well to shun a mirror, for anything more distorting than one eye completely, and the other nearly bunged up, is not easily seen. It passes off in a couple of days, if another fly does not visit you, and can in fact be cured in a few minutes by pouring a drop or two of raw spirits into the eye, or placing a half-chewed piece of tobacco under the lid, both of which remedies are exceedingly painful, and from their violence must weaken such a very delicate organ.

Nearly everybody has fever and ague in a greater or lesser degree, the attacks being intermittent, and when the 'shakes' are on you, death would be

Digitized by Google

happy relief. Quinine is pronounced the best remedy, but I scarcely think anything would keep it off. Lucy escaped from it for a long time; indeed, an idea was prevalent that the weaker sex are exempt from it, which of course is absurd, and could only have originated from the few women who live in the bush as compared to the men.

I was surprised one night soon after I had turned in, to hear old Willie come to the back of our house and call Arthur, who sung out to me to join them. I felt certain that something was in the wind, and true enough our best shepherd had been murdered by the blacks that evening at the Fifteen-mile station. Poor fellow, he was kneeling down kneading a damper on a sheet of bark—we used it for his coffin—when they stole upon him, beat his head into a pulp with their nullah-nullahs, and then, after stripping the body and taking out the kidney fat, had thrown it on the fire. Removing the white man's fat is an invariable custom amongst all the tribes, for they believe that on rubbing themselves over with it, they gain the corpse's strength in addition to their own. They had taken away the firearms and burnt the hut, in doing which they had rather caught a Tartar, for there was a pound canister of powder inside, which exploding, killed one and must have given the others a proper fright, if nothing worse, for they had levanted without taking their dead comrade with them. Old Willie was going to camp there that night, and count the sheep the next morning, so he

Digitized by Google

rode up to the embers of the hut within an hour of the murder.

We at once dug out Dick from the kitchen fire, before which he was coiled, and despatched him after the horses, when Arthur rode to the 'Westward Ho' to try and pick up another shepherd. I started for the police camp—which by this time was permanently fixed on our run, half-way between the head and the cattle station—and old Willie went to bed, as he would have to get out to the Fifteen-mile by daylight, to look to the sheep until another shepherd arrived. It was past midnight when I got to the barracks, and having kicked lustily at the door, was let in by Martin, the officer in command, to whom I explained the cause of my untimely visit in very few words.

'Where did it happen?'

'Fifteen-mile, Pyramid Creek.'

'Who found the body?'

'Old Willie arrived within an hour, and ran their tracks down to the water-hole, and on to the scrub to the northward.'

'Then we'll get 'em by sundown. Here, Pompey, Capiter, Tiger, rouse out here, you fellows!' cried Martin, shying his boots at the sleeping forms round the fire, whilst he struggled into a pair of tight breeches.

The troopers sat up rubbing their eyes stupidly for a couple of seconds, not more, for they caught sight of my horse, and knew what was wanted. In a

Digitized by Google

moment they clustered round the hut door, eager and attentive, while Martin, still fighting the unmentionables, gave his orders rapidly and clearly.

'Pompey, Tom Brown, stay here, other fellows round up yarroman, be off,'[1] and away four of them dived into the darkness, with their bridles over their arms, whilst Pompey and Tom Brown filled the cartouche boxes with ammunition, which Martin served out, saw that hobbles, &c., were on the saddles, and put on the billies for breakfast. No need for a police officer to tell his men to hurry, no grumbling at broken sleep and a tedious hunt after horses in the dark, this was the breath of their nostrils, this was their element, they were going on the war-path and were happy. I threw myself down and had, I suppose, a couple of hours' sleep, when, on Martin waking me, I found five troopers mounted and drawn up in line, and the sixth, who was most disconsolate at being left to keep camp, was holding our horses.

'Everything budgeree?' says Martin. 'Capiter, you got um caps?'

'Yowi, Marmy.'[2].

'Then come along.' And off we go for the head-station at the amble, half trot, half walk, peculiar to Australian travelling, the troopers keeping the indistinct track in the dark as if it had been day.

'I hope Grant will be back and ready,' says Martin,

[1] 'The rest of you bring the horses up.'

[2] 'Is everything right? Have you got your caps, Capiter?' 'Yes, sir.'

Digitized by Google

'for I must be at the Fifteen-mile before the dew is off the ground.' But Arthur is awaiting us, having been successful in getting another shepherd, who, however, has bargained for one more day's drink and thirty-five shillings a week, in consideration of replacing a murdered man; and, bidding a hasty good-bye to Lucy—who has thoughtfully put some spare ammunition and sandwiches into my saddle-pouch—we start, and arrive at the burnt-down hut half an hour before sunrise, having just time enough to roll the poor fellow in the sheet of bark which he had been using, and to bury him in the grave which indefatigable old Willie—who had reached here an hour before us—had dug. But the first streaks of dawn change rapidly into a roseate glow, and in a few minutes up springs the sun, not slowly and bashfully as in higher latitudes, but bounding up at once, making everything look gay and happy for the first half-hour, and seemingly girding up his loins for the race before him, for in six hours he has to reach the zenith, and for the next twelve will be looking down on us, fierce and fiery. But small time to think of this, for see, the troopers are round the water-hole, and bending down to inspect the tracks; while, after a minute, Corporal Tiger says 'Plenty fellow,' and, mounting, trots on towards the belt of scrub running along the side of the creek, Martin, Arthur, and myself bringing up the rear; and waving an adieu to old Willie, who is hailing us to 'smite the murdering dogs; and mind,

Digitized by Google

laddies, ye no cam hame without the braw Terry carbine;' for Willie has been so long an overseer that he even dreams of his sheep, and is thinking where he'll find a weapon for the new shepherd if we don't recover this one. Half an hour has passed, and the boys have pushed on steadily at a trot, never faltering; but now comes a dense patch of scrub, several miles in length—thick brigalow, through which you cannot see half a dozen yards—and here they pull up, dismount, and carefully examine the tracks, we reining up some hundred yards back to avoid any chance of overrunning and obliterating the trail. Then Tiger beckons us, and pointing downwards says, 'Been split like it here; suppose Tom Brown, and Capiter, and mine, leave yarroman, and go messmate like it scrub, you ride round, mine think black fellow sit down along of this fellow scrub.'[1]

Martin nods assent, and in a moment the three are off their horses, stripped except cap and belt, and carbine in hand disappear in the jungle as noiselessly as snakes, while we follow the tracks of the other party which, as the troopers had expected, skirted the outside of the scrub; the horses following the leading boys with hardly any driving.

On slowly, the sun scorchingly hot, and the tracks gradually leaving the edge of the scrub, and striking

[1] 'The blacks have divided into two parties here; suppose Tom Brown, Capiter, and I leave our horses and push through, whilst you and the others ride round; I think they're in this scrub now.'

Digitized by Google

across the iron bark ridges towards the Wonga range ten miles off. What are we to do? We must leave running our tracks and continue along the edge of the scrub until our forces reunite to-night, and we must harry the range afterwards, for it is evident they have split into two mobs to elude pursuit. So we jog slowly on, letting our horses pick up what they can, and falling half asleep in the saddle.

'Another hour and it will be sundown,' yawns Arthur.

'Plenty water sit down like it end of scrub?' asks Martin of Pompey.

'Yowi, mine believe; my word!' and Pompey and Jemmy dash furiously off towards the far edge of the jungle followed closely by us. All lethargy thrown off now, for the keen-eared troopers had caught the faint report of a distant carbine; another and another sound louder as we gallop furiously on, no thought of broken knees or collar bones now, one hand on the bridle, the other working the revolver case round, and feeling again and again that it is unbuttoned and ready, whilst the spurs are jammed home every stride; the troopers fairly dropping the reins on their horses' necks, and using both hands to get their carbines out of the buckets, for the blacks have broken cover now, and if we get between them and the stony ridges for which they are making, we have trapped them. No mercy now, this is the fifth shepherd in as many weeks this mob has murdered. Crack, crack, from

Digitized by Google

the scrub and one fellow rolls over, and another falling on one knee tries to rise in vain. Hold up, good horse, three more strides and we are amongst them. * * *

'Well, upon my word, Martin, I didn't think you were so green as to use a safety spring to your pistol,' said Arthur, as we sat smoking our pipes after tea round a good fire at the end of the before-mentioned scrub.

'No, confound the thing!' answered Martin; 'but I didn't do badly with what I had. We must run the tracks of the other mob to-morrow, and recover the carbine, so good night, you fellows,' and he rolled himself in his blanket and went to sleep. Neither had he done badly, for finding his pistol would not go off, and being in the midst of the blacks who came to bay, he used his stirrup-leather and iron, and rode through them like Cœur de Lion with his mace.

It took us three days' more hard work, and on scanty fare, to recover the poor fellow's blankets, shirt, &c., and to cry quits with the murderers. The country was stony and barren, and the tracking powers of the troopers most beautifully illustrated. After all, they had not taken the carbine with them, but had thrown it into the water-hole adjacent to the hut, so that it was within half a dozen paces of old Willie whilst he was instructing us to recover it. The facility with which the troopers make their own way through unknown country, in two parties, uniting again at sundown, is most marvellous, more particularly when

Digitized by Google

they penetrate scrubs in which a white man would be lost in five minutes. On questioning Corporal Tiger as to how they managed it, I received the following lucid explanation: 'White fellow go like it stars, budgeree that; mine go like it bingey' (patting his stomach), 'that *more* budgeree,'[1] and perhaps there *is* a deeper truth in the remark than appears on the surface.

[1] 'White man is guided by the stars, not a bad plan; I go by my belly, which is a deal better.'

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VI.

THE RETURN JOURNEY.

JOHN KNOX, who was a most indefatigable explorer, and who had been foremost in opening out the magnificent rolling prairies of the Flinders, having observed the better description of pasturage on that river, had secured two splendid runs, and now that a road had been opened and found to admit of communication by drays in all but the height of the dry season, he and his brother determined to sell Mount M'Donnell, and move their flocks westward to the new pastures. Directions were, therefore, sent to Sydney to put Mount M'Donnell on the list of saleable stations. This measure, combined with the constant attacks of the terrible sandy blight from which poor Lucy and baby were continually suffering, determined me to send her to Brisbane, whilst I stayed up a little longer to see how things were likely to turn out. Arthur was also going down on business, and most kindly volunteered to see her from Bowen, whither I was to accompany them, to her father's house; so as the floods would shortly commence, we set about

Digitized by Google

fitting up the dray and breaking up our home, in which by this time we were so comfortable that it caused us many a pang of regret; and indeed we shall both continue whilst memory lasts to look back with deep pleasure on the happy time we passed there, enhanced as it was by the freedom from all worry and anxiety, and the great kindness and consideration we uniformly received from our dear friends the Knoxes.

By this time we were so initiated into bush travelling that we knew better than to lumber ourselves up with traps, so everything that was not absolutely necessary was stowed away in zinc-lined cases, bound strongly with iron bands. Our two chests of drawers being made to divide, each half fitting into a stout case made for the purpose, and being also securely fastened, and our name being painted on each in letters half a foot long, we certainly nourished an insane idea that they would reach us safely. Alas! we little knew the capacity of the white ants, or the gigantic size and bipedal shape to which they attain when attacking property in the owner's absence; but of this more by-and-bye.

We made a beautiful light canopy for the dray with tea-tree saplings bent over and tied at the top, so as to form a dome, covered with light duck—rather an improvement on the tarpaulin of the journey up—and so constructed it that the ends could be kept open or shut at pleasure. The mattress was placed on the floor as before, but no rocking-chair; our poor old friend was

Digitized by Google

left to lay its bones in the bush, and in its place abundance of rugs, blankets, and pillows, formed a most comfortable lounge. Pockets to contain little knick-knacks, a looking-glass, and all kinds of comforts, were hung against the sides of the canopy, and the rest of the room was taken up with provisions only, our clothes, &c., being carried by half a dozen pack-horses. Of eatables we took goodness knows how many boxes of salmon and sardines, six dozen eggs packed in salt, a home-cured ham, a keg of lime juice; not to mention abundance of tea, sugar, and milk; and altogether we determined if our trip up had been rather rough, the luxury of the return journey should counter-balance it. Three fine staunch draught, two saddle, and five pack horses, made rather an imposing caval-cade, and on a lovely morning in January, poor Lucy bid a last good-bye to the home which had held her so happily for nearly two years, and away we went, accompanied by several of the neighbouring squatters, who had determined to accompany us the first day's journey, and camp with us that night. Arthur and I arranged to drive and ride alternately, and we made the horses move twenty miles a day without the slightest trouble, trundling down the range without thinking of it, and reaching the banks of the Bowen, sixty miles, on the third evening. Here we found, to our sorrow, that the river had come down in flood that morning and was rising every moment. I rode down the bank, and found the water more than saddle-flap

Digitized by Google

deep, and rising rapidly. Not a minute was to be lost. Lucy and baby alighted, we bundled the mattress and blankets out, leaving the dray empty, and sliding down the bank put the tired horses at it. The hoarse roaring sound of the water frightened them, and they seemed very disinclined to face it. However, whipping and shouting drove them in, the dray soon lost its hold of the ground, but floated like a cork, and somehow in ten minutes we had it on the other bank. We hobbled the horses and crossed again to see about getting Lucy and the traps over, for we had been told that there was a man a mile lower down, where the water was deeper and quieter, who had a canoe, in which, on an emergency of this kind, he ferried travellers across for not a small consideration, and we determined to put his services into requisition. Since we had crossed on our journey up, a public-house had been erected on the Mount M'Donnell side of the river, and we got their dray to take Lucy, baby, and the traps down to the whereabouts of the canoe, the owner of the latter accompanying us, and singing his own foresight and the praises of his boat in no measured strains, jocosely saying it was worth the inconvenience of the flood to enjoy a pull in it, and bargaining for ten shillings a head, and a pound for the luggage, to which exorbitant demand we were fain to concede with the best grace we could. Having jolted down to a large water-hole, still, deep, and evidently full of alligators, Arthur, Johnny the canoe-man, and I,

Digitized by Google

scrambled down the bank with a bucket and a couple of quart pots, for Johnny had hinted that 'there might be a drop or two of water in her which it would be as well to take out before the lady embarked.' The bank was so steep that it was with difficulty we could keep our footing on the brink, and avoid pitching into the gloomy-looking water; dusk, it is true, was setting in rapidly, but still, I thought, 'there is plenty of light surely to see this paragon of naval architecture.' I strained my eyes, however, in vain, and could see nothing till Johnny, after fumbling about with one hand under water, gave a grunt of satisfaction, and produced a rope, upon hauling which, what seemed to me the hollow trunk of a tree made its appearance, floating just flush with the water. And this miserable log was the vaunted canoe in which a pull would be a pleasure! I fear I said rather harsh words to Johnny, but being very imperturbable he set himself to work bailing without deigning me any reply. Arthur and I perforce helped; I all the time thinking of what would happen if a capsize took place with my wife and baby in the crazy concern, the hole, as I well knew, being always full of alligators at the best of times, and doubly so now that the flood had driven them to take refuge in its placid depths. After bailing away for a quarter of an hour, the 'embarkation' began to show its sides, and in a short time was tolerably empty—by which I mean that Lucy would not have more than four inches of water to sit

Digitized by Google

in on starting, gradually increasing according to the length of the passage—and I was able 'to take stock of it' as the Yankees say. A hollow log, or 'dug-out,' twenty feet by two, sawn off square, and old packing-cases nailed on at either end; such was the craft we had to propel across a deep and large hole with two worn-out diggers' shovels for paddles, and this by starlight, for twilight had ere this died away. However, there was no help for it, so Arthur and I helped my wife in—who by the same token has an innate horror of anything floating—and carried baby down. She was deposited in the middle of the 'Great Eastern,' as with a feeble attempt at wit some one christened the uncouth apparatus, sitting down on the floor and of course getting soaked. I squatted at one end, Johnny at the other, each of us shovel in hand, Arthur watching us from the bank, and ready to jump in should we come to grief. Slowly and heavily the ricketty old log forged along, getting deeper every moment, and all of us exercising the utmost caution, almost holding our breaths to avoid disturbing the equilibrium, until at last we gently grounded on the sand, and with a feeling of intense relief I once more deposited Lucy and baby on *terra firma*; she was soaked and wearied and would have been most miserable at any other time, but I really think she felt so glad to have accomplished the voyage in safety, that she was comparatively happy. After bailing, Johnny and I returned, brought Arthur across, and then went back

Digitized by Google

for the blankets and some food, for we had eaten nothing since dinner, having determined to leave the rest of the things on the other bank until daylight. We had learnt by this time how to handle the old horse-trough pretty well, and were going along merrily enough, with the blankets, provisions, &c., on a platform of boughs placed across the gunwales to keep them out of the water, and had just reached the middle, when she began to fill, and in less time than I take to write it sank under us, blankets, food, and all. I sung out to Johnny, 'What's wrong?' He just answered, 'End-board out,' and we were in the water, he making for the bank we had just left, I for the sand where Lucy and Arthur were. I had no fears about Johnny, for I knew he could swim like a fish; my thoughts chiefly ran on my poor wife having to sleep supperless, and in her wet things, and I was striking out comfortably enough for the fire that Arthur had blazing on the sand, when a cry so horrible, so appalling, came from the direction poor Johnny had gone, followed by a brief splashing and then silence, that I convulsively threw myself half my length out of water, as the fearful thought, 'alligators,' flashed across me. How I reached the bank I hardly know, but I pray God that it may never again be my lot to endure what I did in those few minutes of concentrated agony and dread. I remember staggering up to my wife; then all is a blank.

We none of us, except baby, who seemed very

Digitized by Google

placid in his sandy cradle, got aught but broken sleep that night. I did not dare to close my eyes, that fearful death-shriek seemed for ever thrilling through my brain, and Lucy was completely prostrated with horror and fatigue. The log must have been rotten where the nails were driven, keeping the end-board in its place, and poor Johnny must have kicked it with his heel in shifting his position; such at least was our conjecture, for no traces of either canoe or its owner were ever found again. Even now as I write this, though several years of a more or less exciting life should have dimmed the recollection of that night, it comes back in all its former horror, and I still repeat, as I did throughout that dreary vigil on the sand, 'My God, I thank Thee that *they* were not with me.'

At daylight I crossed on one of the horses, and related at the public-house the circumstances of poor Johnny's death, at which nobody seemed the least surprised, and I may say hardly interested. Indeed I am inclined to think that one man who owed him a good round sum for bush-work was rather glad than otherwise. The river having fallen a little we got our traps over on the pack-horses, and once more resumed our journey, though the late tragical occurrence had cast a deep gloom over us, and hushed the sounds of laughter which had hitherto been wont to issue from the curtains of the dray. Four more days saw us safely installed in little George Bourner's hotel, a new one since we were down before, and a perfect palace to the

Digitized by Google

old one. We had done the trip of 130 miles in exactly a week, and with as little fatigue to Lucy as is reconcilable with bush travelling; indeed, had it not been for the painful incident I have narrated, she would have quite enjoyed it, for it was like a pic-nic on rather an extended scale, and the weather, though intensely hot, had been so far favourable that we had not felt a drop of rain. To explain the seeming anomaly of a river in flood without rain, I must state that there is frequently a heavy fall on the ranges and on the tributaries which feed the large rivers, and which causes a flood in the latter at places many miles away from the district where the rain has actually fallen. I experienced a very curious instance of this once in the case of the Burdekin, which came down in flood during a drought, owing to rain that had fallen on a tributary river three hundred miles away, and which I mention in its proper place further on.

Bowen is not what would be called a very lively town during the heat of the day. All the business is done in the early morning or evening, excepting always the seemingly chief business of the inhabitants, the drinking, to which grateful task they devote themselves with unwearying assiduity from daylight to the small hours of the next morning. I was introduced to one gentleman whose peculiar forte was, that he knew to a moment the time that each public-house opened; and his admirers said he had the faculty of going to bed just sufficiently drunk to enable him

Digitized by Google

to sleep soundly until that blissful moment when the earliest public was open. I watched this talented member of society take fifteen alcoholic drinks before breakfast, under the names of cocktails, smashes, phlegm-cutters, stone-walls, and other American *sobriquets*, and he seemed not a whit the worse. There were two buildings in the place which could be dignified by the name of hotels; the remainder, comprising about a sixth of the town, being mere drinking shanties. On one occasion John Knox had come down, riding a very valuable horse, rejoicing in the name of 'Rowdy,' so called from a habit of his of carrying his rider several hours, and then, without rhyme, reason, or provocation commencing to buck furiously, usually accomplishing the downfall of anyone but his master, who rather valued him for this amiable quality. John put up at one of the hotels kept by the ex-mayor, Abiram Hills, and stabled Rowdy in the premises belonging to the hotel. The next morning not a horse was to be found, some horse-stealers having broken into the place during the night and cleared out with every hoof. The majesty of the law is as slow and cumbersome in a small place like Bowen as it is in any centre of civilisation; so, finding that if they followed the correct method of making depositions and all the rest of the red-tapism, the thieves would be miles and miles away, John and Abiram, both determined men, got themselves sworn in as special constables, and started in pursuit, with a full determination to recover their

Digitized by Google

property and bring the offenders to justice. They soon got on their tracks, and followed as hard as they could push their horses for three days, hearing of them from the few travellers they met, and finding that the evening of the next day would bring them hard on the thieves' heels. They had ascertained that they were three in number, the leader being a notorious horse-stealer named Fisher; and, as they were certain to make a stand, it was necessary to wait an opportunity when they would be separated. They therefore proceeded very cautiously all that day; and, meeting a traveller towards sundown, were informed by him that he had passed three men with a mob of horses, half an hour before, who had asked where the next water was, that he had told them it was in Emu Creek, five miles on, and he had no doubt they intended to camp there. He also said they did not seem in any great hurry, and he never for a moment suspected their real character. Knox and his companion now held a council of war, their conclusion being to strike off the road, hit the creek about a mile to the right of where Fisher and Co. were supposed to be camped, to hobble out, one of them to watch their horses, lest they should detect the vicinity of the others and join them, the other to creep along the creek and reconnoitre, and, after having found out all he could, to return and lay further plans according to circumstances. This was faithfully carried out, Abiram coming back in due course, and saying he had crawled near enough to

Digitized by Google

their fire to make out the three forms, two rolled up asleep, the third smoking, with a revolver by his side, and his ears pricked for the slightest sound. And, as far as the darkness would allow him to distinguish, he thought there was plenty of she-oak in the creek, under cover of which they could steal up to within twenty yards of their camp; lastly, he was pretty sure they had no dog, or it would have winded him. A good hour before daylight they were in the saddle, crossed the creek, made a little *détour*, hitting it again nearly abreast of where the horse-stealers were camped. Here they tied up their horses, and, taking their saddle straps, handcuffs, and revolvers, stole down the bank and wound their way as near to the fire as they could with safety. They knew that at daylight one, if not two of them would leave the camp to look for the horses, and that the breakfast and packing up would be occupying the attention of the others, when they calculated on their vigilance being slackened, and the probability of getting nearer before rushing at them. John told me it was nervous work lying there motionless for so long; his limbs felt quite cramped, neither did the ants fail to gently remind them that they were intruders; and, as nothing relieves an ant-bite so much as giving vent to your feelings, which luxury was denied them, they must be looked upon as benefactors to their race, in remaining mute for the sake of bringing these villains to justice, instead of driving off all their horses during the night, which they could

Digitized by Google

easily have done, not to mention the certainty of losing much time and being put to great expense attending the assizes, four hundred miles away, to secure a conviction!

At the first streak of daylight the man on watch roused the others up, kicked the fire together, and throwing a bridle over his arm took himself off. The other two, after stretching themselves a little, and swearing a great deal, got up, and one of them, who the eager watchers recognised from his description as Fisher, a powerful, determined looking ruffian, collected the quart pots, and started down the bank of the creek for water, whilst the other went some little distance for dry sticks. Now was the time—Fisher was unsuspectingly passing the little clump of she-oaks, cursing the water-hole for being so far off, when the ominous words met his ear, 'Bail up! throw your hands up or we'll fire.' He could just make out the muzzle of a Tranter looking full at him with its cold blue eye; and, before he could recover his surprise, John Knox had his hands handcuffed behind his back. 'You stay and watch him,' he said to Abiram, 'and blow his brains out if he attempts to escape or give the alarm, I'll manage the other;' and, creeping up the bank, he went through the same formula with the stick-gatherer, a poor lad of eighteen, who had been beguiled into this affair by the others, and who, when he saw the great Fisher prostrate and trussed, seemed quite cowed, and made not the slightest attempt at resistance.

Digitized by Google

'Bring him down here,' shouted Abiram; and down the lad was marched. John found out that the third man was an old acquaintance, having been employed by him at Mount M'Donnell as a horsebreaker and treated with more than ordinary kindness, he repaying such consideration by stealing two of their best horses and Arthur's new saddle, since which he had not been heard of, and was commonly reported to have left the colony. Now they knew that 'Jumping George' would come back mounted, and, if he suspected anything wrong, would be off beyond hope of capture, so Hills, who though exceedingly sinewy and strong was a slight spare man, made the lad give him his red shirt and cabbage-tree hat, and took his position by the fire, listening for the tramp of the driven horses, whilst John guarded the two prisoners under the bank of the creek. In a very few minutes came the dull sound of galloping feet, and the foremost horses came in sight, Mr. J. G. bringing up the rear on a splendid gray mare, a racer belonging to the gentleman of fifteen-nobbler-before-breakfast notoriety before mentioned. The figure at the fire was bending over it, sedulously employed in watching the pots, and having his back towards the coming horses. 'D—n you, why don't you stop them?' yells George; but the lad is either deaf or too engrossed in his occupation to pay any attention. Up dashes the gray towards the fire, and her rider flings himself off with, 'Ill —— soon teach you to listen, you ——,' &c.; but the lad stoops down

Digitized by Google

quickly, picks up something off the ground, and, wheeling round, presents to the astounded George the face of Abiram Hills, accompanied by 'Hands up, or I'll fire.'

It was very well managed by Abiram, beautifully managed, you must allow, but just one little instant too soon, for the ex-stockman still holds the reins in his hand; and, whilst Abiram half hesitates to fire, fearful of injuring the mare, he has vaulted on her back, and is tearing along regardless of the two shots sent after him, and poor Abiram is left cursing himself the while for having been so squeamish. Less than two minutes takes him out of sight, and there is little use in going after him, so the victors turn their attention to the prisoners, leaving Jumping George at liberty for some time longer. His career, as is always the case, was short, and he is now at St. Helena, the penal settlement in Moreton Bay; and many weary years will roll out their slow length before he again sets foot in stirrup. John Knox now leaves the duty of sentinel for Abiram, and goes after their two horses, which are tired of being tied up; and, having brought them over, proceeds in search of the prisoner's and the stolen mob, which, having found, they are rather at a loss how to convoy their two captives, for one of them must drive the horses. A happy solution of this difficulty, however, is arrived at by the boy volunteering to do this duty, promising most faithfully not to attempt escape; and, indeed, as the worst horse is

Digitized by Google

given him, he would find it difficult to escape from 'Rowdy,' which steed John intends to ride, and is looking fondly over to see that he is none the worse for his brief change of owners—he (Rowdy) the while eying his master askance, as much as to say, 'In four hours from now, my dearly beloved master, I shall do all I know to put you off my back on to your own, as a slight token of my nature not being changed by the last few days.' Which mental resolve report says he fully succeeded in carrying out. After breakfast, Fisher was handcuffed to Hills' stirrup-iron, John rode beside him, and the lad drove the horses; but about noon, to their inexpressible satisfaction, they met a detachment of native police, who relieved them of their charge. Great credit was due to them both for their activity, the upshot being that the charge was not proceeded with against the lad, and Fisher got a term of penal servitude.

We were detained some days in Bowen, waiting for the steamer, which at length arrived, and I saw Lucy, the baby, and Arthur safely on board, and in a few hours the last sign of even her smoke disappeared, and I was left to wend my way back to Mount M'Donnell alone and pretty miserable.

Every adult immigrant, on arrival in the colony, is given a land-order for eighteen acres, and another at the expiration of two years for twelve acres, making in all the thirty acres so glowingly described by the agent in England. Not in one case out of five

Digitized by Google

hundred are they used for the intended purpose, but as they represent a pound an acre at a Government land sale, are bought by land-jobbers at a third of their value from the poor new chums, by which means, as may be seen at a glance, they make a pretty good profit. A land sale is usually held in the court-house of the township adjacent to the lots about to be submitted to the public, due notice being given beforehand through the medium of the local publications. The upset price of outlying country is one pound an acre, of town or suburban allotments according to their value as appraised by the surveyor-general. To these sales swarm all the land-jobbers in the colony, and sometimes the allotments—more particularly where there is reason to suppose that the township in their vicinity will increase—run up to an enormous price. This is generally paid by the purchasers in the land-orders they have bought up for little or nothing from half-starved immigrants, and as the immigrants generally find their way into a more congenial colony within a month or so of their arrival, I do not see how the Government can reap any benefit from the land-order system; indeed, I have known numberless instances of whole families selling their land-orders *to raise money to leave Queensland*, in which cases it is evident the Government loses eighteen pounds' worth of land, the price of the assistance given the family to enable them to pay their passage, and also even their residence in the colony, the only people benefited

Digitized by Google

being the land speculators before mentioned. One of these gentlemen, who had been so successful in his land transactions as to gain the enviable appellation of 'Corner Allotment Johnny,' was a member of the Upper House—great people, members of the Upper House, and only to be mentioned with becoming reverence—at which august assembly he was a constant attendant, and though no doubt most ornamental on the treasury benches, could hardly be called an orator of the first water, for he had never been known to utter a syllable since Separation, until on a proposal to bring forward a measure to render land-orders non-transferable, the fire of his indignation burst through all bonds of reticence; he got up, stared wildly, in vain endeavours to find words to convey his abhorrence, and as some kind friend was about to slap him on the back to prevent his wrath choking him, he gasped out, 'It's—why it's—it's pre*pos*terous!' and, rushing out, disappeared from the haunts of men for ten days, at the expiration of which he was again to be found in his place, but, alas! the wreck of his former self. The bare notion that anyone could be so vile as to contemplate upsetting the little game he had so successfully carried on was too much for him: he realised, and turned his back for ever on an ungrateful colony that could give birth to such narrow-minded and illiberal ideas. Ah, Johnny, it entered your head early in life that corner allotments made the best stands for grog shops, and if they cost a little more they amply made

Digitized by Google

up in the long run; for all other trades may fail, but you had the foresight to see that, whate'er betided, the publican would reap the golden harvest, and *your* rent would always be secure.

It so happened that a land-sale was advertised to come off during the few days I purposed remaining in Bowen before returning to Mount M'Donnell, and as I had my own, my wife's, and another land-order I had bought, for twelve acres each, I thought I could not do better than get a small allotment in the township; but finding nothing to suit me, and mentioning incidentally that I was the happy possessor of three orders, I was besieged with offers for them, one of which for thirty-two pounds I closed with, though the long price ought to have made me wary; however, I knew the man well and thought him safe, so took his cheque on the Brisbane Bank. I need hardly say it turned out not worth the paper it was written on, and I found out my friend had sold the orders for fifteen pounds, money down, to enable him to bolt from his creditors, so that not only did I lose my own cash but enabled him to swindle a number of other people. I met him some years afterwards, when he seemed astonished at my thinking it was anything but a fair ruse, and indeed was rather hurt that I did not applaud him for his smartness. The way one man (whom I will call Jones) *did* the Government with land-orders was worthy of a down-east Yankee. I must first explain that on land being knocked down to a

Digitized by Google

purchaser at a sale he has to pay a deposit of one-third, the remainder having to be forthcoming within a month, in default of which the land is forfeited, and the deposit returned minus ten per cent. Now Jones had bought up some five hundred pounds' worth of land-orders, getting them, without doubt, for less than two hundred. He then attended a great sale, and bid right and left against all comers, not seeming to care one rush how much he paid, people staring the while, and saying, 'Surely there must be a coal-field or something good on this ground, or the 'cute Jones would never bid so high for it.' However, it seems the sagacious Jones knew perfectly well what he was about, for having purchased to the amount of fifteen hundred pounds, he heaved a sigh of intense relief, notified to the bewildered bystanders his joy at having secured the exact piece he wanted, and saying, 'there was more in that country than they thought,' he departed, having paid his deposit of five hundred pounds in land-orders and got his receipt from the Clerk of Petty Sessions. Whilst everybody was puzzling his brains about what mineral wealth Jones could have found, that worthy had taken ship for another colony, where I don't doubt he enjoyed himself immensely for three months, during which of course his recent purchase was forfeited, he having failed to comply with the regulations by paying the remaining two-thirds within the month, and the land-orders had been forwarded to the Treasury, cancelled,

Digitized by Google

and the accounts duly audited. One fine morning he steps quietly into the Treasury, presents the receipt, and says, 'Some land that slipped through my fingers, of course I've lost ten per cent., but I'll trouble you for four hundred and fifty pounds.' What could they do? he had law and their own statutes to back him, and he wouldn't take orders in payment, so he touched the ready coin, and the transaction got him such a reputation for shrewdness that his fortune may be considered made. Now in England such a thing would, I imagine, be thought 'sailing a little too close to the wind,' but the natural stolidity of the English renders them unable to see the playfulness and appreciate the talent necessary to carry out a really sharp trick. I verily believe that so untouched would city men have been by the exuberance of Jones's fancy, that they would have positively fought shy of him, instead of welcoming him with open arms. Certainly the Government in this case was the victim, and Government is always lawful prey, but apologists for Mr. Jones and birds of his feather must remember that Government is not always open to such tricks, and that sooner than their talents should lie dormant, people of Mr. Jones's class will infallibly exercise them on other victims; the nearer their business or even domestic relations bring them together, the greater being the κῦδος they will receive for their ingenuity in hoodwinking and cleaning you out.

Bowen at this time was 'par excellence' *the* town

Digitized by Google

of the north, and was doing a most flourishing trade, its appearance being bustling and busy in the extreme, except during the hottest part of the day. A jetty, a mile in length, was being thrown out, a saw-mill building, and both merchants and tradesmen were doing well, the opening out of the Flinders country causing many speculators from Victoria and New South Wales to visit 'Capricornia' to gain personal experience of the new plains of promise; and, in short, it was the pleasantest and most thriving little place in the colony, when two things occurred which shook it to its centre, and from which it has never rallied. The first was the discovery of a shorter route to the Flinders from Cleveland Bay, an open dangerous place a hundred miles to the northward of Bowen. Here a sugar plantation had been established by a certain Sydney merchant, to whom Queensland is indebted for the introduction of Polynesian labour, and after this merchant an assembly of hovels, built on a rocky spit, was named Townsville—a cheerless spot, more destitute of vegetation than Aden, having on either side a slimy salt-water creek, beyond which lay miles of black mangrove swamp. The new route was undeniably shorter, and despite its disadvantages as a port, there being no safe anchorage within seven miles for ships too large to get up the slimy ditch above mentioned, the hovels gave way to buildings of greater pretension, and Cleveland Bay in its turn became as thriving a place as poor Bowen had been,

Digitized by Google

all the settlers on the Flinders and Upper Burdekin sending down their wool and getting stores from there.

The second cause of decline was the commercial crisis in England, which ruined the largest merchant in the place, and he being more or less mixed up in every transaction which had taken place since the establishment of the town, the shock which came perfectly unexpected involved in a greater or lesser degree every member of the community. No blame could accrue to anyone; never a murmur was raised against McLeay, even by those who had suffered most; indeed the fortitude with which he bore his misfortunes and the noble way he worked in hopes of in some measure mitigating the calamity to others were above all praise. It was one of the hard knocks of Dame Fortune for which we must always be prepared, and though it was some consolation that nobody was in fault, yet none the less were the bulk of the inhabitants ruined. 'I have no doubt,' the reader will say, 'lose a little money perhaps, but how can one man failing ruin hundreds?' Nevertheless, in a place remote from the capital, where money is unknown and everything is done with paper, it is so. As the large river receives many tributary streams, which in due course, it carries to the ocean, so the small paper of the tradesmen flows into the coffers of the great man; how it happens is difficult to explain, but happen it does. I hardly suppose such would be the result in London, with delivery of letters twice a day and wires from

Digitized by Google

every other house, but it certainly is in the outlying Australian towns, and thus it comes that many people are implicated if a large firm becomes bankrupt. Poor little Bowen! I was grieved on passing through it soon afterwards to see the shutters up in many shops, the grass growing in its streets, and a general air of apathy pervading its remaining inhabitants, who I imagine have little to do but to watch for the arrival of each steamer, and criticise the passengers who are borne northward to their more favoured rival. Our friend, Abiram Hills, with his usual pluck, rallied the desponding Bowenites after the smash, found out that the mouth of the Burdekin, which debouches fifty miles north of Port Denison, was the real place for a township which should speedily pale the newly-acquired glories of the hateful Townsville, and persuading a number of people to join him, did actually found a new township, but from various causes it never succeeded, and was ultimately abandoned by its gallant originator, who in despair seceded, and took the largest hotel in Townsville, where I sincerely trust he is making a 'pile,' for a better fellow or a stauncher comrade in an emergency need never be desired. I hope, reader, this game of see-saw between two little places unknown to you even by name will not bore you too much. I mention it to show the uncertainty of colonial affairs, and that land for which you may refuse 500*l.* an acre to-day, by one turn of the wheel of fortune will not be worth as many pence in six

Digitized by Google

months' time, and *vice versâ*. It is very easy for people to say afterwards that 'they knew it from the beginning, they foresaw it all along,' but nobody can foresee anything of the kind. There is not the attachment to the soil that a residence of generations implants, and on a new place being heard of, people pack up and away, regardless of the feelings of their Lares and Penates so rudely transplanted. One thing is they seldom have time allowed them to take deep root. Flights of this kind are of constant occurrence, and are usually brought about thus. Brown is a storekeeper, married, has two or three children, and is making a very good living and saving money. Still Brown is not comfortable in his mind; it always appears to him that he ought to be making a *better* living and saving a *great deal* of money; so one day the steamer comes in and brings word that a new road has been opened, or a new gold diggings has broken out at Nonsuch Creek, and thousands of people are flocking there. The steamer has also brought a lot of stores for Brown, who says, 'Now's my chance,' charters a small craft or bullock-drays, and sends off his stores, riding off himself to get some kind of humpy up to shelter them on arrival, and leaving Mrs. B. to carry on the business until his return. Perhaps it is a 'shicer,'[1] in which case he comes back a couple of hundred out of pocket; or fortune, it may be, befriends him; the report was true, he is first in the field, stores scarce, money

[1] Anglicè, 'a sell,' a term used by diggers for an unpayable field.

Digitized by Google

plentiful, and no bad debts; so down go fresh orders to Sydney for more stores, up goes a substantial building in lieu of the tent or bark humpy, and two or three months after a letter reaches Mrs. B. to sell off the business for what it will fetch, and to come and join him with darling little Jacky, Billy, and the rest of the olive branches. Thus the reader will see that a man who, when he settled, had no intention of leaving the shelter of his own roof-tree for years to come, suddenly rides away from his comfortable home on the spur of the moment, and *never sets eyes on it again.* Nor is this by any means unfrequent, but in a new country is of constant occurrence.

After a spell of a week, I began to long for the bush again, so saddled up, and, as I fondly hoped, bid adieu to the seductive little township; but I reckoned without mine host. I had invested in a new double bridle, the mare I had being very unsteady, and also in a pair of light but very severe steel racing spurs. Accompanied by two friends I started at nine in the evening, the moon being beautifully bright, and the travelling quite enjoyable. Knowing a short cut out of the township, across a rocky and closely-timbered ridge, I persuaded my companions to come that way; unfortunately, before reaching the ridge, we came across a small plain, and nothing could restrain them from racing over it. Of course my mare would not be left behind, so away she went. On our nearing the timber, I curbed her with all my strength, and had just got her to a

Digitized by Google

reasonable pace, when to my horror the reins came away in my hands, and I must also have fallen back in the saddle when they parted, and touched her shoulder pretty severely with the new spurs, for she gave a wriggling bound which nearly unseated me, and galloped furiously for the timber. My position was far from pleasant, and I had very little time to realise it for a dozen more lengths would dash my brains out, so on the impulse of the moment I slipped my feet out of the stirrups and threw myself off. On recovering my senses I found myself lying amongst the rocks, and for some time thought the whole thing was a nightmare; by the moonlight, however, I could see that my hands were cut about and full of gravel, I felt that my head was all wrong, and on getting to my legs I saw the distant lights of the town, when the whole incident flashed back to my memory. I made my way back slowly and painfully, for I was much shaken, and on arrival found my forehead, hands, and knees, cut open and full of gravel, but otherwise I was little hurt. I had been lying there insensible more than two hours, my friends never even having pulled up for me. Colonial friendship! One of them, however, caught my horse, and it was sent back the next day. On examining the reins, which I retained in my hands when I so roughly dismounted, the mystery was cleared up; they had never had holes punched in them for the tongues of the buckles, and the ends being only passed through the keeper, they of course came away at the

Digitized by Google

first really good pull. I was well enough in a week to pursue my journey, but you may be sure had it out with the storekeeper from whom I had bought the bridle, and took good care that the men who had left me dead for all they knew were never my companions in future. Somehow, I always came to grief riding out of Bowen at night; on another occasion I was dragged out of the saddle by a clothes line, stretched right across the track with a happy disregard to the necks of wayfarers, and deposited on the ground within an ace of a giant heap of broken bottles, which would have made a most uncomfortable bed; as it was, I cut my hand severely.

A few words about dress may possibly save many people the trouble, and it may be the pleasure, of procuring an elaborate outfit. There seems to be an idea prevalent with many embryo colonists that bush life cannot be faced without an enormous supply being laid in of clothes, saddlery, tools, and other articles; and in order, therefore, to be fully prepared at all points, they explore the streets and shops, and make an interesting collection of rough shooting-jackets, fancy shirts, and curious hats, of elegant burnished axes and hatchets, theatrical-looking belts bristling with knives, whistles, and other paraphernalia; they indulge a nice taste and waste much useful money in the purchase of pocket revolvers, and whatever else their fancy and their tradespeople dictate as indispensable; and thus armed and hampered, sally forth with confidence to

Digitized by Google

meet whatever adventures may befall them at their distant picnic. I recollect one pale-faced young gentleman, whose notions of the bush were chiefly culled from romantic literature and a vivid imagination, coming out a sort of elegantly-dressed Robinson Crusoe, with such a load of Cockney necessaries for life in the wilds that he required a dray to take up his wardrobe alone. I fancy his *rôle* was to be able to say *J'ai été*, like the British tourist from Mont Blanc. He was certainly soon in a position to do so, for, after two months' sojourn, during which the white ants had well fattened on his spare raiment, he took his departure for England, where I doubt not he entertained the ladies of his acquaintance with many thrilling accounts of travel and adventure. Ladies, as we all know, are prone to travel with such a modicum of baggage, have such an innate repugnance to shopping of all kinds, and are so heedless of the comeliness of their costume, that the above remarks must not be taken to apply to them, and they will certainly rejoice to hear what simple fabrics, according to my wife's experience, are necessary for a lady's wardrobe in the bush. Lucy used usually to wear simple print dresses, which, while cool, had the advantage of superior strength and durability over muslin, and for riding, a habit of gray linsey. As to myself, I adopted the simple bush-dress of a red flannel shirt, worn open at the neck, and with sleeves rolled or cut off at the elbow, moleskin or cord breeches, and either boots or gaiters. For hats, Lucy used to have a big

Digitized by Google

felt hat with a veil, and I one either of felt or cabbage-tree. I think, on the whole, gaiters and laced boots are preferable to butcher boots. Pulling off a wet pair of butcher boots is apt to be a severe trial to the temper, be the bootjack never so ingeniously constructed, whilst slippers are substituted for gaiters and lace-ups with ease and alacrity. We were not so particular about the sit of a spur as the dandy Nimrods of the shires, but I have a word to say even of these, which should be short in the neck and punishing, and worn without an understrap, so that for dismounted work they may be easily twisted round on to the instep. This simple attire requires no great outlay, but it is as well, of course, to have spare material handy. It is awkward, for instance, to run short of boots, though at the feet of necessity I have learned to make a fair substitute even for these on occasion. His axes and other tools the new chum will do well to get in the colony, where, by the way, he should most certainly get his saddlery, as an Australian differs very much from an English saddle. I purchased my drugs at Reece's in Piccadilly; and I advise people going out to procure theirs also at some good shop in London. Not many things need be taken, but rhubarb and magnesia, plenty of good quinine, ammonia, and eau de luce for snake-bites, should always be at hand; and, when sickness comes, it is highly satisfactory to know that the drugs used are really good.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VII.

SHEPHERDING UNDER DIFFICULTIES.

I DID not stay long at Mount M'Donnell—new people had come, and the place was quite distasteful to me; so I went for a while to stay with some friends on a cattle station on the Lower Burdekin, where there occurred little likely to interest the reader, the time being chiefly occupied in breaking-in bullocks, rather a rough and somewhat dangerous pastime, and in making yokes, which are formed from the creek oaks (*Casuarina quadrivalvis*); and, though very essential for a station, require but little skill in their manufacture, and have nothing about them that would justify my entering into a long description. The worst of the Lower Burdekin is the number of alligators, which make a clean sweep of all your dogs, calves, &c., and will even attack a bullock whilst drinking. Their favourite lurking-places are at the junction of a creek with the river, where there is nearly certain to be a large, gloomy, deep, and almost stagnant water-hole, and from these they sally forth, often making considerable land journeys to get from one lagoon to

Digitized by Google

another. I had a very handsome dog, half colley or sheep-dog, half Irish retriever, and I recollect once on riding up to a hole such as I have described, 'Sport' dashing down the bank bounded into the water as was his wont, and, as he did so, I saw an alligator's tail whisk up in the air, and in a minute or two 'Sport' came back looking very disconcerted. The fact was, he had jumped on the top of an unsuspecting saurian, either taking his siesta or on the look out for wallabys coming down to drink, and it was a toss up which was most frightened, the alligator at having his slumbers broken by a black mass plumping on to his back, or 'Sport' at finding himself in such dangerous proximity to his enemy. Poor old fellow! I managed to keep him for several years, but he was killed eventually by a tick, which are very prevalent in the scrubs, and kill a dog in a surprisingly short time, how, I cannot say, for even when distended, they are but little bigger than a pea. We used to get a little fishing at this station, eels and catfish being tolerably plentiful. The latter we never ate; they are a horrid-looking fish without scales, with a large flat head, wattles, a sharp spiny back fin, which will cause a festering wound if it pricks you, and not answering to the saying 'mute as a fish,' for they make a great row when caught. They seem common to both fresh and salt water. The eels resemble their English relatives, and are very good peck. We had two other kinds of fish which we could only look at and covet, for we found

Digitized by Google

all attempts to seduce them fruitless; these were the guard-fish, and the *Barri mundi*, or Australian salmon. The former, a slim little fish like a whiting with a snipe's bill, so frail and delicate as to be almost transparent, is most delicious eating, and much prized at Sydney, where I have since tasted them. They bask on the surface of the still water-holes, presenting a very curious appearance with their long beak, for they took good care to give us no opportunity of a closer inspection by resolutely refusing every kind of bait. I have no doubt a fly would have enabled us to triumph over them, but we had none to hand, and were not expert in their manufacture.

The *Barri mundi* is a splendid fish, much resembling in its habits the English salmon, for running water and access to the sea are indispensable to it. I have often watched them longingly, where the current ran briskly, keep their position with heads up stream, seemingly without motion, and pointing the fin of scorn at all the arts employed to drag them from their watery abode. I once tied a bundle of red rags—the disciples of Walton may jeer if they will—at the end of a bullock-whip, and viewed the novel fly-rod with the utmost complacency; but, alas! when I came to wield it, the heavy lash fell on the water in much the same gentle way a flail falls on wheat when properly handled, and the astonished fish vacated the scenes of these abnormal phenomena. I have seen them, how-

Digitized by Google

ever, speared by the black boys in the most skilful manner. With a sharpened switch for a harpoon, they will sit down and watch patiently for hours, until, with a sudden underhand jerk, it is launched into the water, in most cases transfixing the fish which, hampered by the weapon catching in the weeds, soon becomes exhausted, and is dragged out by its lynx-eyed captors, who have never lost sight of it, following it through its flight as only a black boy can. They are white fleshed, large scaled, remarkably nice eating, and average from eight to thirty pounds.

Some of the dreary water-holes mentioned above are greatly feared by the black boys—we had such a one near Mount M'Donnell—on account of the 'Bunyip' having been pleased to make his residence there. What a 'Bunyip' is like nobody knows, it never having been vouchsafed to a white man to behold one in the flesh, or fish as the case may be. 'Dick' used to say, 'My word, big fellow, live like it water. Plenty that fellow parter[1] black fellow.' But his descriptions were very vague. However, they all believe in an aquatic monster, which will devour them without salt should they be incautious enough to trespass on his premises; and I knew an officer of police who was determined to ascertain the truth of his boys' reports that a mighty 'Bunyip' was in an adjacent swamp, and, after cautiously crawling towards the little reedy islet where the gentleman's habitat

[1] Eat.

Digitized by Google

was supposed to be, did see a huge nondescript form moving, and fired both barrels into it, causing the death of a valuable imported sow, which had retired to this secluded spot to farrow in peace and quietness—from which circumstance he is always distinguished from others of the same name by the prefix of 'Bunyip L.'

After a sojourn of three months with my friends, to my delight Arthur Knox arrived one evening, and we shortly afterwards started for Mount M'Donnell, to gain which we proposed taking a bridle track over the range called the Gap—to give any correct idea of which would be impossible. At the foot of the range the track lay along the bed of a mountain torrent, the poor horses having to scramble over boulders of water-worn rock, some of them like giant dice, cubes of twenty feet square, and most dangerous, for we could never see half a dozen yards ahead, and two or three blacks could have destroyed an army by simply dislodging some of the rocks which hung threateningly on the hills which overlooked each side of this defile. Once my horse got his foot jammed between two large stones, and we were more than an hour before we cleared him by means of levers. The ascent of the spur was quite terrific, and how the horses surmounted it seemed wonderful, but an Australian steed is endowed with the agility of a goat, and at last, quite exhausted, we stood at the top. Here, luckily, there is a small creek with good permanent water, so a quart of tea was soon brewing, and revived us rapidly.

On the banks of the Burdekin, just opposite to the

Digitized by Google

Mount M'Donnell cattle station, we found a tent pitched and yards built, and on enquiry ascertained that two brothers named G. were travelling their sheep, and had obtained permission from the new owners of the run to lamb down there. I used often to have luncheon with them, for Arthur and I were guests at the police camp, and my time was much employed in riding about the run to find some horses, which being my own private property had not been sold with the rest of the stock, and my wanderings often took me to the G.'s camp about noon. One day the eldest brother asked me if I would mind taking charge of the sheep, for he and his brother were obliged to go down to Rockhampton for the assizes, and offered me two pounds a week, besides a shilling a head for every lamb I reared. This suited me very well, for they would not be away more than two months, and I should be making a little money, for I calculated on saving at the very lowest computation seven hundred lambs, which with the two pounds a week would make a nice little sum; so after consulting with Arthur and making a bargain that they should find him in rations also, I agreed, and accordingly we both took up our abode with the G.s a few days before their time for starting on their journey. The tent consisted of the tarpaulin for the bullock dray, hauled over a pole placed in two forked sticks, and being twenty-four by twenty feet, was not uncomfortable except that it was open at both ends, and thus the rain, when it chanced

Digitized by Google

to fall, of course beat in at either end without let or hindrance. Under this covering were the stores, tea, sugar, flour, &c., all the things in fact that a travelling squatter carries on his dray, for as soon as he finds a patch of likely country unoccupied he will sit down on it, run up a house, and hey, presto! there is a new station formed. A little behind were the yards they had made for the ewes and lambs, the wethers and rams being at another yard a mile off, where was the shepherd living in a miserable little tent. Now the G.s had to take the shepherd from the ewes down with them, so I had only the man with the wethers, who of course had as much as he could do to look after his own flock. However, Robert G. promised if he did not find a shepherd at the first public house to replace the one he was taking away, he would come back himself. This was a distinct and clear understanding, otherwise I never would have undertaken the task. At this time the country was very much parched, for no rain had fallen for months, and the Burdekin, at this part nearly half a mile in breadth, had shrunk into a shallow little stream, so small that the G.s had bridged it with three hurdles, over which the sheep used to cross to the better feed on the opposite side of the river. The day before the G.s intended to start, an incident occurred, so curious that had I not witnessed it I should have found difficulty in believing it. About three o'clock in the afternoon, the day having been remarkably hot and the sky

Digitized by Google

cloudless, I was looking round the ewes and lambs which were on the far side of the river, and talking to one of the G.s, who had just taken the dray across to be in readiness for the morning, when we heard a distant rushing sound, getting stronger and stronger every moment, and evidently approaching rapidly.

'By Jove,' said Robert G., 'it's a flood! Over with the ewes and lambs.'

I was quite astounded, but there was no time to be lost. Arthur, who was with me, good-naturedly helped, and we hurried the stupid old mothers and the lambs—tiresome little brutes, who will always go any road but the one you wish them to—over the bridge and across the sandy bed, the roaring becoming plainer and nearer every moment, and the sheep seeming to go slower than ever up the bank, and then dashed back to save the three hurdles composing the bridge. We met Robert G. with one, and Arthur and I took another each, and toiled back through the heavy sand. We could see about half a mile up the Burdekin from the bridge, and now the water was quite visible, coming down like a wall two feet high, across the whole breadth of the bed, at the pace of about a hundred and fifty yards a minute, as nearly as I could judge, and we had only just time to throw down our hurdles on the bank, when the dry sand over which we had just crossed was a boiling sheet of dirty water. I watched the wall of water narrowly, it did not throw out an advance guard, but came

Digitized by Google

down keeping a perpendicular face, much in the same way that I have seen the lava at Mount Vesuvius rolling, but of course at fifty times the speed. I suppose this is attributable to the deep bed of sand which greedily drinks up the undercurrent, allowing only the surface water to show, but whatever was the cause it was a most imposing sight, and we cudgelled our brains in vain endeavours to determine where the flood came from. What caused it? We had had no rain for months, neither had we seen distant lightning or any indication of a fall elsewhere. However, here clearly was the result of it, and a most lucky thing it was that the dray had been crossed when it was, for half an hour later would have put an effectual stop to it. The G.s hastily caught and saddled their horses, rolled up their blankets, and wishing us good-bye, crossed the river whilst they had a chance, for there was no saying what height it might be the next day. The water rose over their saddles, and by sundown no man or horse could have crossed it. Arthur and I were much disgusted at the whole affair, when we came to consider it, for here we were—or, more correctly speaking, as he was only my guest, here I was—with only one shepherd and some four thousand sheep of all denominations (inclusive of a thousand ewes on the point of dropping), several hundred young lambs, the country so burnt up as not to afford food for a bandicoot, and the flood cutting me off from the horses and the succulent food which was on the other

Digitized by Google

bank. Nevertheless I was determined to make the best of it until the arrival of the shepherd Robert G. had so faithfully promised to send, and with Arthur's assistance rubbed along pretty well for a couple of days, though it was short commons for the poor ewes, there not being a green blade of grass within miles. A third day passed and no shepherd, and on the fourth, instead of one arriving, the scoundrel who had the wethers said he was too ill to attend to them any more, and announced his intention of taking his departure the next day. What could I do? I told him what I thought of him, waiting for an opportunity such as this to leave his employers in the lurch, but the pig-headed German insisted on going, so I fear I lost my temper, and told him he should not only go, but go that minute, and bundled him down the bank into the river, where I watched him cross, half wading, half swimming, and giving vent to sundry guttural Teutonic oaths. I don't believe any Englishman would have done such a mean trick, but it is by shabby things of this kind that the Germans have earned the appellation of 'black fellow white man,' as they are called by the black boys, who rank them in the same category with Chinamen.

I was now in such despair that it approached the ludicrous, and in my utter helplessness I could not help roaring with laughter at the fix in which I was placed. Luckily it was evening, so I had all night to think it over. The problem I had to solve was this:

Digitized by Google

given four thousand sheep, of all ages and sexes, some with lambs at foot, others about to lamb, no yards to put them in, no feed, and no horses to shepherd them on, what is the best course to adopt? The puzzling thing was what to do with them at night, for it was necessary to move the wethers and rams from the place they occupied, which was a mile off, and to box the whole flock together, for which purpose the yard I had at the tent would be almost useless, for it would not hold above one-third of them with close packing, and where to put the rest I could not think. Arthur stuck to me manfully, and as it would be hard that he should help the G.s without getting paid for it, I drew up an agreement with him for the same weekly wages that I was receiving. At daylight the next morning I went to the German's tent, struck it, and drove his flock down to the ewes and lambs, and then, having snatched some breakfast, opened the yard gates and let them all mix; such a baa-ing and bleating never was heard, the poor little lambs got crushed and trampled to death, and I soon found my shillings would give me but little trouble to count if this continued. When we returned at sundown, weary, footsore, dirty and miserable, we were each staggering under the weight of green lambs that had been dropped during the day, and now we had to find their mothers and catch them. Well, the reader need not be troubled with a tedious account of our chase after the refractory dams; by dark we had only secured two, so we had to do what

Digitized by Google

was very painful to us, i.e. to kill every lamb. Poor little things, they would only have died of starvation, and as they could not keep pace all day with the flock, which had to be driven a great distance on account of the scarcity of grass, we should have run the risk of losing the mothers also, so, much against the grain, we killed them all, and burnt their little carcases in several huge heaps. Now came the question, What were we to do with the sheep all night? We couldn't watch them, for we were too fagged, and wanted all our strength for the ensuing day. So we filled up the yard with as many as it would hold, and camped the rest outside, chaining up the four dogs at intervals around them, in the hope that they would give the alarm if dingoes came prowling about. We both slept the sleep of the weary, and at daylight I woke, and listened for the bleatings of my charge. Never a sound could I hear, so I awoke Arthur, ran up to the yard, and found not a trace of a sheep to be seen, not even an old ewe poking about after her lamb, all clean gone, and Heaven only knew in what direction, whilst the fools of dogs were straining on their chains in joy at their useless vigil being over. I am sure I never felt anything to equal the mortification those sheep caused me; I have no hesitation in saying that sometimes they would drive me into such a paroxysm of fury that I would gnash my teeth and howl like a wild animal, at other times wring my hands and burst into tears from impotent rage. I often look back now

Digitized by Google

and wonder why we didn't desert and leave them to their fate, in doing which we should have been quite justified; having, however, undertaken the task, we determined to do our best. After breakfast we started off in different directions, each lumbered with a carbine on account of the blacks, and I at length, after wandering about all day, stumbled across the rear-guard of the flock, and by running, shouting, and behaving like a maniac, got them camped again at dark; when I say them, I mean all that I could find, for I had no yard to count them out of, and could not tell of how many I was short. To add to our troubles the dogs did not know us, and would not work, so that sometimes when at a distance from home and in danger of being benighted, I used to find myself stooping down and twitching at the heels of the sheep, barking in vain imitation of the laggard dogs, until my mouth was full of dust and my heart full of rage. Had any of my acquaintances seen me I am sure they would have given me a wide berth as a lunatic. Arthur and I used to recall old stories of lycanthropy. Oh! what would I not have given to have been a wolf sometimes! how I would have worried those sheep! The worst of the beasts is that the more you put yourself in a rage the more indifferent to your feelings and the more obstinately contrary they become. I am not an ill-tempered man in the main, but I confess, until a month of this work had so to say broken my spirit, and I had become callous to every injury the sheep could heap

Digitized by Google

upon me, I used to become quite frightened at finding what storms of passion would rise at a moment's notice. What made our work so difficult was, that such feed as there was lay at least two or three miles off, and the strong wethers would rush ahead, leaving the poor weak ewes and 'crawlers'—as the aged and decrepit sheep are called—an immense way behind, so that the drift between the leaders and the laggers was at least a mile, generally two. Now in ordinary shepherding this does not occur, for the whole flock, being of one sex and age, move together whether it be quickly or slowly, and only require keeping in sight. We used to find that on an average they broke through our canine sentinels every third night, and we had to tramp after them, and this in different directions, which made it very lonely. Every now and then we would stumble across a place where a batch of twenty or thirty stray ones had camped for the night, and then half a dozen carcases picked by native dogs were a sure find at no great distance. The river had not risen after the night it first came down in flood, but it fell so gradually that there seemed no prospect of crossing the sheep for another six weeks.

We got our letters pretty regularly from Mount M'Donnell, for they sent there from a neighbouring station every mail day for their budget, and the messenger would drop ours at the tent for us, solacing himself with some luncheon which we always left out for him in return for his kindness. We used to amuse

Digitized by Google

ourselves by killing opossums, and could cut them out of trees with tomahawks as well as any black fellow. It is astonishing what a degree of heat they will stand before quitting the hollow tree in which they sleep during the day. When the trunk was too thick to climb up, we used to cut a hole at the base into the hollow pipe, and light a fire, which would soon roar up this primitive chimney, feeding on the rotten interior, and Master 'Possum would hold his ground until all his hair was singed off, a method of capturing them, however, which we soon gave up, for we caught them for their skins only, of which we were anxious to make a rug. The flesh tastes too much of gum leaves to be agreeable to a European, though eaten greedily by the blacks. Our diet was mutton, varied occasionally by a few ducks or bronze-wing pigeons; once, too, we ate a snake, and very good it is, if you could divest yourself of the repugnance natural to devouring a reptile. This was a very large brown snake, over seven feet in length. As I was driving the sheep home one afternoon, I saw them as they streamed along cautiously dividing, leaving a clear space of a dozen yards or so, and wondered what was the cause of it, for the plain was quite flat and destitute of even a blade of grass; however, when the tail of the flock had passed, I saw this snake coiled up, and on my approaching him he reared his head and showed no inclination to budge. I had only a short stick, two feet long, in my hand, and confess I did not much fancy tackling him whilst coiled

Digitized by Google

up, from which position they can dart half their length with lightning rapidity, so I looked about for a longer weapon, and seeing at some distance a fallen bough, ran to get it. I have always found that though in rare cases a snake will hold his ground whilst you are looking at him, yet the instant your eye is taken off he will try to escape. This one did so, carrying his head eighteen inches off the ground and looking very vicious. I brought my bough down across his back, and though it shivered into fragments it had fulfilled its duty by breaking his back, so I soon finished him with my short waddy. It may be worth while to state here, for the benefit of any of my readers who may ever be brought in contact with snakes, that the safest way of approaching them whilst in motion is sideways, never behind, for they can throw themselves backwards their whole length. A very slight tap disables them, the articulations of the backbone are so delicate, and a pliant switch is better than a stiff stick. I had often heard that the blacks ate venomous snakes, if they killed them themselves, but not if anyone else did, so I took this one and coiled him up in the ashes just as he was, and though I confess we only took a mouthfull each, yet it was really very good, were it not for what after all is but a squeamish idea. Who would not prefer a nice white collop of snake to a dish of snails? One other change of diet we had. After breakfast one morning I went off with the sheep, Arthur remaining behind till he had made a damper, when he was to

Digitized by Google

rejoin me. I was strolling along, ruminating on things in general and the irksomeness of this kind of life in particular, when in a scrub close to me I saw a calf of some four or five months old, quite detached from any herd; indeed, there were no cattle in the vicinity, all the rest having been mustered on the other side of the river a fortnight before, prior to the Knoxes moving them to their Flinders station, when this poor little wretch must have been overlooked. Immediate thoughts of veal instead of the everlasting mutton came into my head, so I incontinently pulled out an old revolver I had furbished up to carry in lieu of a lumbering carbine, and dropped the calf in his tracks. I could not stop to dress the carcase then, so dragged it some distance into the scrub, and went on after the flock, who had sheep-like seized the opportunity of my attention being occupied for a few minutes and spread out in hopeless confusion amongst the scrub (had I *wanted* to drive them there it would have taken half the day and nearly broken my heart). Finding Arthur somewhat long in coming I shouted and cooehed lustily for him, and at last he turned up quite out of breath and ghastly white. Poor fellow, he had heard my shot and hurried on, thinking I was attacked by blacks, and on arrival at the spot had found the marks of blood, and the track of some heavy body being dragged along, so made sure I had been murdered, and was wondering what to do next when my shout reached his ears. We could not spare salt for

Digitized by Google

more than one hind quarter, and our pot would barely hold the other, so we left the remainder for the dingoes, but found the change of diet most agreeable. That evening, after enjoying our veal and new damper, and whilst yarning over our pipes, Arthur told me that before my arrival on the station some men had been camped at the other end of the run with travelling sheep, who were strongly suspected of shooting some of the Mount M'Donnell cattle, for they seemed always to have beef, and yet never bought any. One day Dick came in and told him that seeing smoke he had ridden up to it and found the body of a calf half burned, and produced a piece of the hide. 'I now thought I had got them red-handed,' said Arthur, 'so rode up to their camp about sundown, making some pretext about looking for horses, and said I would remain with them that night. I saw they looked rather put out at my determination, said their accommodation was very bad, and, in fact, gave me as many broad hints as they dared that my room was preferable to my company, to all of which I turned a deaf ear. After a modest repast of execrable salt mutton, which they cooked for my benefit, I lit my pipe and threw myself down on a heap of wool-packs piled in a corner of the tent. It was not long before my nostrils detected the presence of some foreign matter, though at first I hardly knew where the odour came from, so I said,

'Queer smell of tainted meat here; what can it be?'

Digitized by Google

'Oh, dead sheep at the yards,' answered Duffing Billy, the biggest scoundrel of them all. At last, after ferreting about, I felt my hand come against something cold, and hauling it out said, 'Why, what the deuce do you call this?'

'That?' said Billy without a change of countenance, and taking the hind-quarter of veal I had unkennelled out of my hand; '*that!* why, don't you know a kangaroo ham when you see it? we keep it to feed the dogs on.'

I confess I was so much taken with the rascal's unblushing effrontery that I nearly burst into a roar of laughter, and remarking that 'from the largeness of the bone it must be a new species,' I changed my mind about staying there all night, and one of them only too willingly caught my horse, when I rode home. I sent word to Martin, of the Police, the next day, and he intimated to Billy and Co. that they had better be cautious; and I don't think they ever had another banquet off our run. It was not Combe's fault, to whom the sheep belonged; he had gone down to port and could hardly be held answerable for his men.

When the flood had subsided a little we were able to get our horses over, and then we shepherded on horseback for a day or two, but contrary to expectation found sitting in the saddle so tedious that we gave it up. We used to find a great variety of wild plums (*Achras Australis, Owenia venosa*), which, though nearly all stone, were nice tasted, but required

Digitized by Google

to be buried in the ground for at least a fortnight to render them fit for eating. From information given us by some travellers, it appeared that the flood was caused by heavy rains which fell on the ranges at the head of the Clarke River, one of the largest tributaries of the Burdekin, and distant from us nearly three hundred miles, so the reader may imagine what a vast quantity of water must have fallen to flood a river of such magnitude. After two months it had subsided enough to permit of our crossing the sheep; poor things, how they did revel in the green feed! and how the thought of how many lambs we could have saved had we not been cut off from it exasperated us!

We stumbled across a curious sight: a dead tree overhanging the river and covered with thousands of flying foxes (*Pteropus poliocephalus*), some hanging on to the trunk and branches, and others attached to them. They are nothing more than gigantic bats, measuring from three to four feet between the wings, which are armed at the joint with hooks by which they hang head downwards. The head resembles a fox; the fur, of a bright chestnut hue, is very handsome, and the eyes large, bright, and beautiful. With a wantonness only to be excused by the monotony of the life we were leading and the eagerness with which we pursued anything novel, we fired a shot into them, when the cloud of black wings quite darkened the air as they flapped about bewildered by the bright sunshine. At night, whilst out after opossums, which

Digitized by Google

emerge from their holes after dark, and on a moonlight night can be easily shot, we often saw flying squirrels (*Petaurus Sciureus*), which are by far the prettiest little creatures we have in the bush; of a beautiful gray colour, the fur is as soft as down, and I am sure would make very handsome muffs; their means of flight consist of a piece of skin running the whole length of the body and stretched out by the fore and hind feet, to both of which it is attached. By distending these they are enabled to float along in a lateral direction, gradually sinking lower until they reach the ground or the tree they are making for. I have seen them in captivity, where they are very clean and make nice pets.

One morning, just as we were finishing breakfast, the G.s arrived, and I really think I never felt more joyful in my life than at being relieved from further shepherding; besides which both Arthur and I had received letters which rendered our presence in Brisbane indispensable within a month from that date. They seemed very thankful to us for having stuck to the sheep, and we at once set to work and made a rough yard to count them through. I told them I estimated the loss at about ¾ thousand more or less, and they expressed great satisfaction if it should prove so little. However, when the whole number were told we found under two hundred short, which I could scarcely credit, so we really had done much better than we expected.

I must now relate the cause of the G.s visit to

Digitized by Google

Rockhampton. We knew that the younger brother Edward was on bail for the murder of a black fellow, and that Robert and the shepherd who went down with them were witnesses in the case—so much they had told us; but now we heard the whole account from the papers, and I think the reader, when he has heard the whole affair, will not blame us for parting company with such fellows as soon as possible. It appeared that on their journey up they camped at a station where the blacks were 'let in,' that is, allowed and encouraged to come and make themselves useful, shepherding a few sheep, chopping wood, stripping bark, and a thousand odd jobs to which they are adapted, receiving in return protection as long as they behaved well, and little presents of blankets, tomahawks, &c. This is a very bad plan indeed, according to my idea, in nearly every case ending in wholesale massacre on one side or the other, the old root of all evil, the gins, being the invariable cause of the first ill-feeling. However, whether a good or bad system, it is one adopted by many squatters, and Mr. B., at whose station the G.s then were, had been exceedingly kind to the tribe on his run, which they repaid in a negative way by not stealing from him when there was a possibility of doing so from anyone else. The blacks had a camp just outside the paddock fence, and the G.s, strolling down there in the evening took a fancy to a certain gin, and seizing her dragged her to their dray, where they fastened the poor creature with a heavy

Digitized by Google

bullock chain round her ancles to the wheel. Mr. B. was away from home when this took place, and the men on the station, if they knew anything about it, which seems doubtful, did not feel themselves called upon to interfere, so these savages kept the miserable woman shackled like a dog all night, and told her husband they intended taking her away the next morning, and he had better pick up another one. At daylight the husband and some of the men of the tribe made a rush at the dray to release her, when Edward, without further ado, drew his revolver and shot him. He fell, mortally wounded, and was carried away into the scrub dying, by his companions. The G.s now began to get frightened at what they had done, so released the gin, yoked up, and started. They had not, however, gone far when Mr. B. (all credit to him) overtook them and told Edward he should ride down and take out a warrant against him for wilful murder, which he did, and hence the cause of their visiting Rockhampton. Now, I appeal to the reader, if such an act was not worthy of a gibbet as high as Haman's. The deliberate cruelty of stealing the woman, chaining her up, telling her husband they intended to take her away for good, and then shooting him for attempting to rescue her, has, I firmly believe, no parallel in the blood-stained annals of the Colonies. And these were educated men, who would be much insulted if not thought gentlemen. I do not profess any maudlin philanthropy, or even liking for the blacks; on the

Digitized by Google

contrary, I dislike them, for they have done me and mine bitter injury; but I say that this act was wanton, brutal, and cowardly, and I say further that no success will ever attend a colony where such a fiendish crime can be palliated and laughed at as rather a good joke. At the Assizes the whole thing came out in its hideous detail; the prisoner had able counsel; the defence set up was that the man was still alive, that none of the witnesses had seen him dead. This was true to the letter; they had not seen him actually dead, but they had seen him carried into the scrub on the point of death, after the customs of the natives, and had heard the death-wail raised within two minutes of the body being lost to their view. No one had a doubt but what the man was dead enough. 'Never mind, only a d—d nigger; serve him right,' &c. 'Not guilty, my lord.' Would you believe, reader, that on the jury giving their verdict, this Edward G. had the audacity to ask the Chief Justice 'if he left the court without a stain on his character'? To which his lordship returned him an answer which rather astonished him, but which as I don't recollect the exact words I will not quote. Arthur and I felt angry with ourselves for days that we had been working in the way we had for such men, for I declare, had we known the truth, they and their sheep might have been swept away in the flood, and we would not have stretched out a hand to help them. From the care we had taken of the sheep, and the destruction of the lambs

Digitized by Google

being unavoidable, we of course expected that as they had broken their agreement by not sending a shepherd to replace the one taken away, we should be remunerated in as great, if not a greater degree, as would have been due to us had the lambs been saved. But this they utterly refused to do, so we shook off the dust of our feet against them, after receiving a cheque each on their agent at Rockhampton. We did not think it worth while to compel them by legal measures to pay us more, indeed I hardly know if we should have made our case good, for bush justice is proverbially fickle; but there was no moral doubt that had we not stuck to their sheep as we did—and which they confessed they hardly expected to find we had done—the whole flock would have been lost. Moral: Should any of you my readers ever have to undertake a job in the bush, bind your employers down in writing, put aside all delicacy of feeling, and see an agreement in black and white drawn up and witnessed, taking care that provisoes to meet every contingency be inserted before doing a stroke of work. It must be remembered that, however repulsive to you it may seem to look upon everyone as trying to get the better of you, yet it is none the less true that those who speak you fairest are in most cases the very people who will be foremost to repudiate any claim to which they are not fastened down by writing; will promise anything to obtain assistance in an emergency, and then, after getting all they can out of you, cast you off like an

Digitized by Google

old shoe. There are, of course, many brilliant exceptions, but nevertheless insist on having a document: the honest men will generally propose it themselves, for it is equally binding on you; the rogues will say, 'All right, old fellow, we won't quarrel about a trifle,' and then cheat you without scruple.

We went on to Mount M'Donnell, and found several people who had come up to look at the run preparatory to bidding for it, to whom we gave all explanations and every assistance in our power. The mail brought us the unwelcome news that the steamers had given up running north. The A. S. N. Co., I believe, thinking the wretched Capricornians were too much given to grumbling about high fares, determined to show them how utterly dependent they were on that courteous monopoly, and so let them try a spell of a few months without a steamer at all to bring them to a proper state of subjection. This was bad hearing for Arthur and me who were obliged to reach Brisbane in less than a month, and to add to our troubles the country was so parched and burnt up that horses would never carry us down to Rockhampton, the most northern port to which the steamers deigned to run, and which was distant from us over 430 miles. 'Let us sell our horses and walk it,' I said to Arthur one evening half in joke, and by bed-time we had made up our minds that it would be the only way of making our arrival within the given time a certainty, and determinations being arrived at with rapidity in the

Digitized by Google

bush, he said, 'The day after to-morrow will be the first of the month, we'll start then; the steamer leaves Rockhampton on the 21st, and we ought to catch her if we look alive. Good night.' And the whole thing was settled. The next day we spent in getting our horses together, giving directions to a man we had engaged to take them down to Port Denison, how much he should part with each for, and in giving final orders about our luggage being sent down by the first drays. The upshot of this was, that after we got to Brisbane, though we wrote and wrote, we could get no news of our chests of drawers or of anything, and not until, after waiting for two years, I made a great commotion about it, were the remnants of our goods and chattels, and these utterly and completely spoiled, forwarded to us. All my wife's wardrobe, pictures, books, valuable papers, were described as being destroyed by white ants; but the truth was this: the people who became possessed of the place, or their subordinates, had broken open our cases and stolen whatever they wanted, leaving what things they could not use in an exposed place, where the white ants soon rendered their depredations imperceptible. But white ants, however sharp set, can hardly devour valuable prints rolled up in an air-tight tin case, metal binocular glasses, a whole medicine chest, or a case of surgical instruments; or if they destroyed both our saddles, they could hardly have ventured on the stirrup-irons; neither could the most hungry of ants or

Digitized by Google

the best educated of cockroaches have wielded a pair of scissors with such skill as to cut large square pieces out of poor Lucy's cloth riding-habit. I know who took my medicine chest, and I know that my drugs being very good, direct from Reece & Co., and totally unlike the miserable rubbish sold in Capricornia, killed the man who plundered me, for he was a confirmed valetudinarian, and it was as impossible to keep him from physicking himself as to try to prevent a duck entering the water. This, however, was but little satisfaction to us, and I have never ceased to regret the loss of so many little things, such as specimens of natural history, &c., which, to say nothing of their intrinsic value, which I set down at nearly 200*l.*, I valued for association's sake, and for the fact that many of them were not to be replaced, my certificates, medals, and valuable papers to wit. I therefore conclude this chapter with one more moral deduced from sad experience. Never trust to your friends in Australia to forward you anything down from the bush; once up there, it seems the law that it is never to see civilisation again, unless you take it down yourself, and so very lax is the code of morality in such cases that I really believe that the people who burst open an iron-bound box hardly thought there was any harm in doing so.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER VIII.

A LONG MARCH.

Our equipment for the journey was very simple; it is astonishing what a number of things you find you can do without when you have to lug them along yourself; so we confined ourselves to necessaries in the strictest sense of the word, and took only a flannel shirt and trousers, and two pairs of socks; these, rolled up in a single blanket, formed our entire kit, rather different from the elaborate library and other luxuries which I humped up to Wilton on my first arrival in the colony. Some few other little things, such as tobacco and matches, we put into our blankets, which we wore over our shoulders, the two ends strapped together, forming a kind of horse-collar, which is by far the easiest method. Arthur tried the knapsack he had used amongst the Swiss mountains in other days, but was soon obliged to discard it and take to the more homely and comfortable if less civilised 'swag.' Our arms consisted of an old double-barrelled pistol and a Colt's revolving carbine, the former warranted to kill anything in the neighbourhood but what

Digitized by Google

you fired at, yourself included, the latter a most useful though very heavy weapon. Our attire was the everlasting flannel shirt, tweed trousers, and blucher boots. The less I say about our head-dress the better, for hat was not the correct name for the thatches that crowned us; frequent use as missiles to hurry the G.s sheep had knocked out of them any shape they ever rejoiced in; but they answered the purpose admirably, and with some of the long silky moss peculiar to the scrubs wound round them as 'puggrees,' to keep off the sun, looked rather picturesque, and like work. I forgot to say we had a towel each, a most useful addition, and well worth the extra weight. The reader laughs to himself and says, 'Fancy considering a towel heavy,' but every ounce, ay, or half-ounce, counts in a long walk against time over a badly-watered country, and it is undeniably the weight that kills.

We started at daylight on November 1st, and by sundown made a station we knew well, and finding that the next day's stage was thirty miles, twenty-eight of which would be without water, we halted for a day to make a water-bottle, which is constructed of new canvas of the size wanted, sewn into a bag, the neck of a bottle being inserted to fill and enable you to drink from it. Ours was capable of holding about two quarts and a half, so when full was no inconsiderable addition to our load. Canvas, I have no doubt, seems little better adapted to retain water than the proverbial sieve, but it not only will hold it after it has been well soaked,

Digitized by Google

which causes the flax to swell, but from its being porous and affected by the slightest breeze it keeps the water most deliciously cool. Armed with this we started afresh on the 3rd, and indeed never had cause to regret our delay, for our bottle, if it did not actually save our lives, was of the greatest comfort, and made comparatively light work of what would otherwise have often been severe privation. November is not the month that anyone in possession of his senses would select for a pedestrian tour in Capricornia, more particularly in the height of a drought. The heat is intense, the ground baked and scorching to the feet, the country dried up by sun or burnt by bush-fire, and all nature thirsty-looking and disconsolate. I will not attempt to inflict on the reader an account of every day's journey. We tided over the twenty-eight miles, and on completing the distance and getting to water found lying near it the body of a shepherd who had been murdered the day before. Our attention was drawn to it by seeing a number of hawks rise from a little patch of brushwood as we approached, and flap heavily into the nearest trees, indignant at our intrusion and only waiting till our backs should be turned to commence their horrid feast anew. In this instance, as in all others that came under my notice, the blacks had evidently stolen on the poor fellow from behind, for the back of the head was crushed in, and the usual mutilation had taken place to get the kidney fat. We covered him over with some bushes to keep the birds

Digitized by Google

away, and a couple of miles off came upon his hut, the embers of his fire still heated as he had left them the day before, a dog on the chain (for what reason I can't conceive) half perished with thirst, and a number of sheep, some in the yard, others a little way off, but the whole place wearing an indescribable air of melancholy, which was only too much in unison with our own feelings. 'Rumpat et serpens iter institutum.' Not a pleasant omen, stumbling across a spectacle of this kind so early on our journey. Had we been as superstitious as the Romans of old, I fancy we should have given up, and waited till the auguries were more favourable. The next day we made a considerable *détour* to report the murder at the station to which the poor fellow belonged, and resisting the many seductive offers to take his flock, wended our way onwards. We heard afterwards that the blacks had driven off 400 of the sheep into the ranges, where they had built a proper yard, and regularly shepherded them, showing how closely and for what a length of time they must have watched the habits of the murdered man; and when the police found them they had several carcases hanging up and dressed in the same way an English butcher would have done it. Our order of the day was to start at daylight, after making tea for breakfast from the water-bottle, and trudge on until we came to water for dinner; if we reached it too early, we filled our bottle and carried it until noon, and then had dinner, using the water which we carried, generally

Digitized by Google

managing to reach a creek or hole about sundown, when we had supper, filled up the bag, and started again pushing on from two on a dark to ten miles on a moonlight night, when we camped away from water and without a fire; thus there was but little chance of blacks stumbling across us at night, except by accident, when they would be as much frightened as ourselves. Indeed, they rarely move after dark; they dread 'devil-devil' too much, and their own camps are always near water. Whenever they are compelled to travel at night they always carry a fire-stick each, and in the dark the appearance of these dull red sparks flitting amongst the timber, or moving slowly through the open country, is very curious. Our bed varied according to the nature of the ground, a few branches of gum-tree smoothing the inequalities of very stony berths, and with our blankets over us, how we did sleep! our slumbers in most cases unbroken. Once a dingo tried to drag the cooked beef down from the sapling on which it was hung, and at the foot of which I was sleeping, until rudely awakened by his forepaws coming down on the blanket which covered my face, when I jumped up, thinking the blacks were on us at the very least. And once Arthur, to whom reptiles seemed to have a particular attachment, found a carpet-snake sharing his bed with him. We stopped at stations for the night on one or two occasions only, for we used to be detained by waiting breakfast, and thus got a late start, so we used merely to stop to buy

Digitized by Google

our flour, get a piece of cooked meat, and then pass on. Besides which, sleeping in a dirty hut, on sheepskins filthy and full of fleas, is less tempting than the bare ground with fresh air. In camping out it is *always* advisable, and if there be a moon *absolutely* necessary, that the face be kept covered to avoid moon-blindness, a very common occurrence where this precaution is not taken, the effect being total loss of sight from sun-down to sunrise. Our stages averaged about thirty miles a day, our longest was thirty-four, water in this case not appearing till that distance had been accomplished. When we did reach the long-wished-for holes, they were generally miserable affairs, the water so low that to dip it out with a pint pot it was necessary to wade into a bed of slime reaching knee deep. Water did I call it? a mixture of sheep manure and pea soup would express its taste and consistency better, but to us no nectar ever tasted more delicious, and by boiling it the thick scum would rise to the top, and thus become removable, the action of fire also lessening the sheep element to a great degree.

We did not find the actual walking nearly such hard work as we had anticipated; the blanket round the body was very stifling in the heat of the day, and the carbine and water-bottle irksome to carry; but we were in splendid condition, thanks to G.s sheep, and we were not troubled with an ounce of superfluous flesh. Most luckily I had a very comfortable pair of blucher boots, but Arthur Knox's were new and too

Digitized by Google

small, and pained him terribly. He tried all kinds of devices, cutting out a piece here and making a slit there, but to little purpose, and he suffered tortures. Some one has said with a great deal of truth, 'Of what value would all the riches and every enjoyment this world can afford be to a man who always had a nail in his shoe?' And nobody but those who have been compelled to undergo it can form any idea of the agony of the smallest abrasion, when the victim has to plod on, on, on, no respite, no cessation of pain, except the short relief afforded by bathing the feet. I have often wondered since how he struggled on so manfully, and my conscience has upbraided me for the impatience I showed when he was obliged to sit down for a few minutes and rest. I noticed a peculiar thing about the box-trees (*Eucalyptus amygdalina*). On the Burdekin watershed the leaves are long, resembling the ordinary gum, but the moment we crossed the dividing range, and came on to the Fitzroy watershed the leaves changed to distinct ovals, quite different from the boxes we had been accustomed to, though in every other respect the trees seemed similar.

On the seventh day we arrived at a small township called Nebo, which we entered unwillingly, being compelled by want of provisions to visit it, the officer at the native police barracks having refused to sell us any rations, the only piece of incivility we met with on our journey. This refusal on his part entailed a walk of seven miles extra when we thought our day's

Digitized by Google

stage was over. However, food had to be got, so on we went and got to a little inn about eight in the evening, where we had a glorious supper, and paying our score overnight went to bed—yes, actually to bed, with sheets and other long-forgotten luxuries—intending a daylight start. We had ascertained that there was a well with water at a deserted public house seven miles on our road, more in Denison Creek, five miles further on, after which we should find none until we reached Funnel Creek, distant from Nebo twenty-six miles. We were successful in getting away early, and trudged along purposing to have breakfast at the well; but on our arrival found to our dismay that it was eighty or ninety feet deep. We discovered an old hide which we cut into a rope, and bending on a quart pot I proceeded to draw for water, whilst Arthur lit the fire. Hurrah for breakfast! We were sharp set, and anxiously watched the pot banging about against the sides of the old well as I hauled it up. Alas! alas! 'there's many a slip;' when we got our water to the top, behold it was putrid, so putrid that no amount of boiling would have rendered it palatable even to stomachs as little particular as ours. It is doubly disappointing losing a thing when almost within your grasp, and so we found it in this case; but quelling the calls of appetite we shouldered our swags, and lighting our pipes set out for Denison Creek, which in due time we reached, very thirsty, for the heat was intense, and our water-bag had been accidentally cap-

Digitized by Google

sized on first leaving Nebo, so we had not wetted our lips that day. 'Now for breakfast,' we said, when we saw the ten trees which indicated our approach to the creek.

'It's very odd there are no cockatoos or jackasses,' remarked Arthur; 'what should we do if it was dry? I'm half dead with thirst already.' His dismal suggestion became a reality: there was not a trace of water in the glaring sand. We were now in a most unpleasant position, twelve miles from any means of allaying our thirst in one direction, fourteen in the other; and from the expectation having been wound up, the sudden crushing of our hopes was very cruel. We ran the creek down for a mile or so, stopped and dug with our pannikins in the sand, but in vain, however deep we went no moisture gave us the slightest encouragement to persevere. I left Arthur to sit down in the shade and rest his feet whilst I ran the creek down for two miles farther, looking, but oh! so anxiously, for any sign of the wished-for element, but no traces could be seen—nothing but glaring sand. I came to a solitary sheep, thin as a skeleton, left behind by a travelling flock most likely, and stood for some minutes with my pistol out debating whether I should shoot him for the blood; but I thought I would try on a little farther, and if unsuccessful take him on my way back. When I did return, after a fruitless search, he was gone, a most merciful thing for me, for I think had I been able to accomplish my wish it would have

Digitized by Google

killed me. I got back to Arthur thoroughly done up, my tongue cleaving to the roof of my mouth and my feet blistered with the scorching sand. Two things only were open to us; go on, or stop and die was all that was left, there was no other course; so waiting under the she-oaks until the mid-day glare had a little subsided, we crawled along towards Funnel Creek. I had tried smoking, my solace under most circumstances, but it increased my thirst; I then chewed tobacco, but it absorbed all the moisture and aggravated my distress. I now put a small pebble in my mouth and sucked it, which I think afforded a little relief. We dragged miserably along, hardly speaking, and sitting down to rest every half mile; when we did open our mouths it was to talk of the most delicious beverages we had ever tasted, to give vent to bitter reproaches that we had not drunk more when we had the opportunity, and to maledictions on the people at Nebo for misleading us. Reader, did you ever suffer acutely from thirst? No torture that the ingenuity of a fiend could invent can equal it. Imagination aids and aggravates the torment, raising up visions of sparkling streams and cooling drinks. Strange that pure water does not dwell on the mind nearly so much as out-of-the-way things that you have not tasted or thought of for years: Yankee drinks last quaffed in California, and forgotten until now, rose up with extraordinary vividness in my memory, mingled always with the regret at not having made better use of my time then and drunk more.

Digitized by Google

The road we were walking and the telegraph line were one at this part, which is always most wearying travelling from the distance you can see ahead through the unchanging vista formed by the felled trees; we never seemed to gain ground, each undulation as we surmounted it presenting a view the counterpart of the preceding, and not a whit more encouraging. About sundown a horseman passed us, and told us we were five miles from Funnel Creek; we begged him to take our water-bag, fill it, and come and meet us, assuring him we were half dead, but he cantered off and left us. A little relief at dusk, and we stepped out more vigorously; at last we fancied the timber was thickening, and about nine we were at a little water-hole in the creek. I was too busily employed to watch how much Arthur drank, but I can answer for myself, five pints as fast as I could swallow them, then a bathe whilst the quarts were boiling for tea or breakfast, whichever we liked to call it. All feeling of fatigue left us after our ablutions, and, having drunk our tea, we made our way to a small sheep station a couple of miles off—for we feared to sleep in the creek on account of the blacks—where we had solemnly vowed we would take a day's spell. It now seemed to us curious how we could ever have suffered from thirst, so rapidly does the past fade away when the present is realised; and that for which an hour before we would have cheerfully given all we possessed, we now scarcely deigned to look at. The next morning we

Digitized by Google

got up as fresh as larks, and, strange to say, instead of taking our anticipated spell made that day our longest stage, thirty-four miles. We passed during this walk Lake Elphinstone, the only lake, in the proper sense of the word, I ever saw in Australia, a glorious sheet of water, bounded on three sides by lofty ranges, a small township being on the fourth and open side. It is named after Mr. Elphinstone-Dalrymple, late Premier of Queensland; and the prettiest spot in the colony is most appropriately named after as bold an explorer and as good a fellow as ever set foot within its boundary. Our journey was unmarked by any further incident, if I may except being charged by a knocked-up bullock on the banks of the river Styx, which, had it caught us, would most probably have sent us across that river, and our being nearly taken up for burning telegraph posts, of which charge I need scarcely say we knew nothing. When we arrived at Marlborough, a little bush township only sixty miles from Rockhampton, we found we were before our time, so our pockets not being sufficiently strongly lined to induce us to dally away our time at a bad hotel, we took it easily, and reached our destination on the evening of the 18th; seventeen travelling days, for four hundred and thirty miles, without counting the distance we sometimes diverged from the straight road. We could have gone on to Brisbane and not felt it, we were in such first-rate condition.

The next day after breakfast we visited the G.'s

Digitized by Google

agents. I went in to their office taking Arthur's cheque with me. The old merchant was exceedingly civil; asked me numberless questions about the sheep, how the lambing had turned out, whether there was much chance of a good clip; was curious about the state of the country; deplored the drought; thought G. rather headstrong and rash in shooting a black so openly—'you see it makes such a stir,' he said, 'doing it so publicly;' asked how they arrived, hoped they bore the fatigue well; remarked they were in his books deeply, dishonoured their cheques, and bowed me out; a finale as unsatisfactory as it was unexpected. I went out to rejoin Arthur, hardly knowing what I was doing, feeling like a man in a trance; and I must have looked pretty long in the face, for Arthur burst out laughing at me, whilst indignation would only permit me to say, 'They're dishonoured,' and stand gasping, much to his amusement, for it turned out to be a consummation he had fully expected. So you see, reader, we had been working all that time, and such work too, for a brace of scoundrels who had never intended to pay us, who had pledged their wool for two seasons in advance, and before leaving Rockhampton had been distinctly told by the agent that he would honour no cheque drawn upon him. They had a sleeping partner, a poor clergyman down south, whose name was on the draft as one of the firm, and we could have compelled him to pay had we chosen; so not only did they cheat us, but actually empowered us to cause their poor

Digitized by Google

innocent partner serious injury and annoyance had we thought fit to take proceedings. So ended our transactions with these men, and although the loss as it happened fell lightly on us, still no one likes to find himself swindled out of what he has honestly and hardly earned; and think how grievous would have been our position had we been poor working men, depending on these cheques to carry us to our wives and families, and instead of getting our due found ourselves penniless and five hundred miles from the rogues who had cheated us. Go to—there is law! strong to redress your wrongs, injured working man, and compel your adversary to stump up. Yes! there is law, and it is strong to redress, but, alas! it is also expensive. And where is poor Jem the shepherd to find the money to pay for a summons when he can't afford a new pair of boots to replace those worn out in his knavish employer's service? How is he to pay for having it served at such a distance? Supposing the summons served, verdict for plaintiff, execution in default, &c., what can you levy on? Who is to feed Molly and the little ones while this little comedy of justice is being played out? No, Jem the shepherd, light your pipe with the dishonoured cheque, and don't engage with any man until after due enquiry, but better lose ten times the amount than 'walk into the parlour' of the law.

We took our passage in the steerage of the steamer, which left a day earlier than we had expected, so we

Digitized by Google

were only just in time after all; and such a filthy hole the same steerage was: filthy bunks, no accommodation of any kind, food execrable, huge lumps of coarse, half-raw meat flung on the table, for which the miserable who have stomach to look at it have to battle with their stronger brethren in misfortune. My faculties were kept on the *qui vive* by a lunatic who was on his way to the asylum at Woogaroo under the charge of a policeman, and who, much to my disgust, was placed in the bunk immediately beneath mine, so that I had the benefit of all his ravings, and the pleasant anticipation of his teeth meeting in my calf every time I got in or out.

How glad I was to get back to civilised life for a little while the reader may imagine. Lucy gave me a more detailed account of her trip down than I had received in my letters. Whilst the steamer was at Port Mackay at the mouth of the Pioneer River, the blacks attacked and burnt a house just opposite the town in broad daylight and within sight of the inhabitants and the passengers on board the steamer. They were very nearly lost crossing the Wide Bay bar on which with a south-easterly wind a fearful surf lashes up. Stress of weather had detained them for two days at anchor under Frazer's Island waiting a lull to slip out, but none appearing the captain weighed and stood towards the bar to reconnoitre. He miscalculated his distance, however, and advanced so far that retreat was impossible, so putting on all steam they dashed at it. It was a terrible quarter of an hour amongst

Digitized by Google

PUBLIC LIBRARY STATE LIBRARY N238

the rollers, which broke over the quivering little vessel in green walls. Should the water put out the fires now, or any accident happen to the machinery, it would be certain destruction. One huge sea came tumbling on board, swept everything fore and aft, and, despite of the hatches being battened down, found its way below, rising above the stoke-hole plates. A repetition of this would extinguish the fires, and then no human aid could save them. However, 'the sweet little cherub that sits up aloft' took them under his wing, and a few minutes saw them over the bar and battling with a gale of wind in their teeth, but comparatively safe, and the next evening landed the drenched and frightened passengers at Brisbane, full of the praises of Captain Harley and his crew, who had behaved under the trying circumstances as British seamen always do.

I found the town had undergone considerable improvement since I had last seen it. A well-timed fire or two had swept away the tumble-down wooden humpies which formerly rubbed shoulders with their stone brethren; and more regard to uniformity was observed in the new buildings, and thus the appearance of the principal thoroughfares was changed for the better. All the streets are laid out at right angles to each other: those in one direction are named after the English kings, the others after the queens, so you need never be at a loss if you remember whether the street you seek is masculine or feminine. The

Digitized by Google

botanical gardens were in great beauty, and the volunteer band playing in the evening added to the attraction. A bridge was in course of construction over the river, and indeed a temporary wooden edifice had been thrown across, but the first flood sent it whirling down to Moreton Bay; and some disagreement arising between the corporation and the contractor, the permanent works were discontinued, and the Government being on the brink of insolvency themselves were unable to help, so the iron cylinders stand up in the bed of the stream, unsightly, an impediment to navigation, and an ever-present memorial of the recklessness and folly of—whom shall I say? well, of nobody, for the Government blamed the corporation, who worried the contractor, who bullied his men, who appealed to the public, who abused them all four individually, severally, and collectively; and this is the nursery rhyme of a Queensland public work.

Railways were the cry now—the beautiful Darling Downs must be opened out at any cost for agriculturists; so it was borrow, borrow, borrow, at any rate of interest, to get the new plaything, and to make everything flow on tranquilly. So a toy-railway was established between Warwick and Ipswich, at Heaven only knows what expense, and as far as I know was utterly useless except to aid Ministers in giving picnics to their friends. It is an acknowledged axiom that roads should precede railways, but then everything is

Digitized by Google

reversed in the Antipodes; the trees shed their bark instead of their leaves, and other similar eccentricities, so a sagacious parliament voted supplies for a railway to a place before there was a decent road to it. One tithe of the borrowed money thus squandered, spent in repairing the road, bridging the creeks, and improving the road over the range would have supplied a real want and done good. Now there is a bad road which is always used, and a worse railway which is never used. It is said that out of some dozen officials kept at the terminus at Ipswich, four of them took to their beds for several weeks on the arrival of a train with seven passengers, arguing that if such an overwhelming traffic took place daily they would soon be knocked up with the hard work. Meanwhile, Capricornia took offence at the expenditure of all the borrowed money at the southern extremity of the colony; the northern Jupiter in its highly-intellectual columns fulminated against 'a rapacious system of centralisation' and a total disregard of the feelings of the Capricornians, who would not stand still and witness what it then struck them as being 'wilful squandering of borrowed capital,' the conclusion being, 'Why are we not entitled to a railway also? Our pastures are as fine, our people as energetic,' &c. So a sop must be thrown to the justly outraged northerners in the shape of a railway to commence at Rockhampton and end —— nobody troubled themselves about where it should end, or what use it would be. The thunders of the 'Jupiter'

Digitized by Google

had shaken the length and breadth of the colony, 'wresting from an unwilling ministry what nothing but the firm and determined stand taken by Capricornia's hardy sons could have brought about—a tardy recognition of their wrongs;' after which little burst of self-glorification the 'Jupiter' descended from its stilts, and became as civil as it had before been the reverse. All breaches were healed now; 'Capricornia joined in heart and interest with the south would hand in hand march onward.' This and such-like amenities the 'Thunderer' heaped on its contemporary, the 'Southern Messenger,' to which that reliable organ replied with the thickest coat of flummery its talented editor was capable of laying on. This lasted as long as the works continued; a costly station was erected, locomotives by twos and threes arrived, a factory was built, plenty of money spent by the man constructing the line (which did actually reach nowhere, going thirty miles and there abruptly leaving off), and all went merry as a marriage bell, until want of money stopped the works, since which the 'Jupiter' has advocated separation and raised the clamour about centralisation with redoubled vigour. I hear the *Great Northern* railway is shut up now, all the staff paid off, the engines and machinery rusting, and the station destroyed by white ants—a fit ending for such an undertaking. But though the station will crumble away rapidly enough, the debt incurred is not undergoing the same process, and the children

Digitized by Google

now in the Colony will be gray-haired men before all the mischief caused by this fatal error shall have passed away.

Amongst the things which had made great progress during my absence from Brisbane was the Acclimatisation Society—a most useful institution, having for its object the introduction and domestication of all innoxious animals—birds, fishes, vegetables, &c., both useful and ornamental; the perfection of races newly introduced or already domesticated; the spread of indigenous animals; the procuring, by gift, purchase, or exchange, of animals, &c., from the United Kingdom and foreign countries; the holding of periodical meetings, and the publication and interchange of reports in furtherance of these objects. A large piece of land in the vicinity of the town had been granted the society by Government, and their endeavours were meeting with much success. They hoped shortly to turn out some deer, but I don't know whether they will thrive.

One afternoon, Lucy and Arthur were out shopping, and I had remained at home with Captain Grant, when we heard a most extraordinary roaring noise coming nearer and nearer, the cause of which puzzled us very much, until enormous hailstones began to fall, thinly at first, but soon in a great shower, and of the most extraordinary size I ever witnessed. In fact they were not hailstones but lumps of ice, each piece being about as large as a cake of toilet soap, or perhaps a circular saltcellar would give a better idea of them. Men,

Digitized by Google

cattle, everything had to seek shelter, and several cab horses were severely wounded. The force with which they descended may be imagined, when I state that our verandah was six feet broad and roofed with corrugated iron, and several of the stones cut holes in it as if a six pound shot had passed through. The large warehouses on the river bank, which were entirely covered with corrugated iron, were completely riddled, the hail cutting through them as if they had been brown paper. There was not a pane left in the photographers' studios; the fan-lights and plate-glass windows of the new town-hall were dashed to pieces, including a full-length stained-glass portrait of the governor which had been recently placed in the latter building. In our little house we had twenty-three panes of glass to replace, those on the lower storey being broken by the ricochet of the stones alone, which, striking the verandah floor, rebounded, knocking a hole in the drawing-room windows, and flew to the far end of the room, even inflicting dints in the piano. I was terribly alarmed for Lucy's safety and directly it was over, which was in less than ten minutes, sallied out to find her. She had been in the show room of the great hardware merchant during the storm, looking at lamps, nearly all of which were now lying hopeless wrecks. This took place in midsummer, when the weather was very hot, beating down the corn, stripping every tree, killing numberless sheep and birds, and doing a great deal of damage. After seeing one of these storms,

Digitized by Google

there is not much difficulty in realising the Egyptian plague of hail.

The colony was in a wretched state at this time, the people leaving by hundreds, every steamer so crowded that it was difficult to get a passage. The influential colonists met to consider how the exodus could be checked, but notwithstanding their efforts, it was evident the railway works must soon be abandoned. Even now the Government had difficulty in meeting its hebdomadal engagements, and the unemployed were threatening to sack Brisbane in revenge for being induced to emigrate under false pretences. Of course 500 meetings would not persuade men who had been once deceived to run the risk of remaining in the hope of better days, so they did little good beyond allowing divers quidnuncs an opportunity of ventilating their eloquence. In due course of time the deluded unemployed did get up a demonstration, paraded the streets, and talked of marching on Government House. His Excellency, with a regard to his personal safety as the representative of Her Majesty, which was beyond all praise, had the volunteers (the only organised force) quartered in and around Government House to protect his sacred body, and the Government steamer, 'Kate,' with her steam up off the steps of his garden, ready to convey him to a place of safety should he be hard pressed—the town the while left to the mercy of the navvies, but for the protection afforded by the Government clerks, who were all sworn in as special

Digitized by Google

constables. The sheriff and police magistrate (not being representatives of Her Most Gracious Majesty) rode out to meet the rioters, and by a few well-timed words prevented any collision, the extent of the damage done being a head or two broken. Under the influence of the refreshment which the shopkeepers distributed with a lavish hand to their protectors the Civil Service clerks, some of them grew very valiant. One little fellow, inflamed with heroism, stalked out into Queen Street with the avowed intention of taking the ringleader single-handed, but an Amazon from the sister isle rushed at him, wrenched his truncheon out of his hand, tucked him under one arm, and flourishing his baton, strode the whole length of the street, challenging any two specials to retake him in language more forcible than delicate. Not long after this, we were all very much amused at the mail-coach from Brisbane to Ipswich being 'stuck up' by a bushranger one afternoon, only four miles out of the capital. There were seven or eight passengers, who all allowed themselves to be overawed by a solitary rascal with a rusty old pistol. The most amusing part was that a valiant Government officer, who was on the box beside the coachman, had a loaded revolver, which in his dismay, instead of shooting the assailant, he handed to the coachman, the only man amongst the number who showed the least pluck, for he tried to fire the revolver at the robber; its owner, however, had in his fear adjusted the safety-catch, so that it was useless, and

Digitized by Google

these eight great men had to stand with their arms in the air, whilst their captor examined the mail-bag, from which he extracted all he wanted, then troubled them for any loose coin, jewellery, &c., they might have about them, gave them permission to put their hands down, wished them good afternoon, and rode off.

Having some business to do at Rockingham Bay, I got a passage in a steamer going there; and, managing to get through what I wanted during an afternoon, was able to return in her—otherwise, I should have been detained for goodness knows how long. On our way south, we passed through the Palm Islands—a most beautiful group—anchoring for a short time to collect specimens of the coral, with which the place abounds. It was a most lovely sight; allowing the boat to drift gently along and peering down over the bows at the beds of coral, seeming so close in the clear water that you felt inclined to stretch out your hand and reach it, although in reality two or three fathoms beneath the surface. We had a black boy, who dived; and, in a couple of hours, had as much as we wanted. While off Port Denison, the barometer suddenly fell, and the appearance of the sky portending a gale of unusual severity, we bore up and ran into that harbour for shelter—and very lucky for me that we did so, or I should not now be writing this. By daylight the next morning it was blowing the most fearful hurricane I ever witnessed. We had two anchors down, with both cables veered out to the clinch, and steaming full speed

Digitized by Google

to relieve the strain—yet we dragged. Anything to equal the fury of the wind I never saw; the rain beat against your hands and face like a dose of small shot, rendering it impossible to face it. A new oilskin coat I had was torn into ribbons in a minute; and, my trousers being tucked up, the long ends flogged my legs until I was half mad with pain. There was not much sea when it was at its height, for the wind literally cut the tops of the waves off, driving them miles in shore in a shower of spray. It was a regular cyclone or revolving storm, the wind going gradually all round the compass—most luckily making a shift when, had it continued five minutes more in the previous direction, we should have been ashore, for we had dragged steadily into such shallow water that a few more minutes and we should have taken the ground. The houses on shore were blown about in the most distressing way. All the wooden houses in the townships are built on a number of piles, sunk into the ground to keep out white ants, and nearly every one was either entirely or partly removed from its place. Whole verandahs were stripped, and walking, or crawling—for the wind would not permit of standing upright—in the streets was quite dangerous, from the number of sheets of galvanised iron flying about like giant snow-flakes. By night the worst was over; and, as it then blew off shore, there was smooth water, and no danger. The next morning rose so calm and lovely that, were it not for the upturned houses and torn-

Digitized by Google

down trees, the whole scene of yesterday could easily have been imagined a dream. Badly as Bowen fared, it was infinitely better off than its rival, Townsville, which was nearly levelled to the ground. Rockingham Bay also suffered severely; the only store of any magnitude was blown down, and the verandah-roof of the hotel, twelve feet in width, and which bounded two sides of the house, was torn off in one piece, and carried two hundred yards to the rear, where it was found in close companionship with a heavy whale boat that had been transported in the same abrupt manner. One little coasting vessel, the 'Eva,' has never been heard of since. She was supposed to have gone ashore on Hinchinbrook Island, for a steamer reported making out a white man among the natives; so a search party was organised, and the island, which is of great extent and very mountainous, was ransacked as much as the time and means at their disposal would permit, but with no result; not a trace could be discovered to warrant the faintest supposition that any of the unfortunate crew had escaped. Most probably she foundered—a better fate for them than being prisoners amongst those savages. Foremost of this search party was our old friend Abiram Hills, always ready to aid with purse or in person when a good deed was to be done. Passing south from Port Denison, we stopped for an hour at a place called Port Molle, to examine an old wreck which must have been there for half a century. Nothing of her is now left, except a few ribs; nor any-

Digitized by Google

thing which would give a clue to her name or nationality. The cargo had been coal, a good deal of which was still lying about. I picked up and kept as a curiosity an old iron bolt about three feet long, and so crusted with oysters as to be at least eighteen inches in diameter. The sight of an unknown wreck always sets one meditating on what country she belonged to, what became of the crew, and all about her—a waste of time, for the mystery will never be solved until all secrets are brought to light.

From the great depression which pervaded the colony the value of land and property had depreciated very much; so I seized the opportunity, and bought a nice house in a good part of Brisbane, and for a very moderate price; and, after safely installing Lucy therein, feeling that sitting down idle would not buy the baby a new frock, I determined to try my luck at the diggings which had lately been discovered in the neighbourhood of Rockhampton; so once more started in an entirely new line of life, an account of which I will reserve for the next chapter.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER IX.

A TURN AT THE DIGGINGS.

SOME friends of mine had a cattle-station on Curtis Island, which, with Facing Island, forms the harbour of Port Curtis, or, as it is usually called, 'Gladstone,' the name being derived from the township, which is beautifully situated at the mouth of a creek, the depth of water in which is sufficient to permit steamers to come alongside the wharves. At one time there seemed every prospect of its becoming an important place, the country all round it giving every indication of mineral wealth. Copper was found on Sir Maurice O'Connell's station, 'Iveragh,' though not in sufficient abundance to pay the cost of working; and, very shortly afterwards, gold was discovered on Calliope Creek, distant twenty miles from Gladstone, whither an immediate rush took place, and things looked lively enough. This must not be confounded with the great Port Curtis or Canoona rush, which was forty miles to the westward of Rockhampton, and to which people flocking from all corners of Australia found it was a 'shicer,' and were brought away, disappointed and

Digitized by Google

famishing, in steamers sent by their several governments. The Calliope diggings were steady and remunerative to any man who worked hard, but no monster nuggets were found or immense 'piles' made; and, being only alluvial, they were worked out in a few years, and are now deserted but for a few plodding Chinamen, who make washing the dirt out a second time pay. The diggings to which I thought of wending my way had been lately brought to light, and were thirty or forty miles from Rockhampton; the principal workings were called the Crocodile diggings, but the whole country was auriferous, and you found parties of 'prospectors' fossicking in every gully. This, I have no doubt, conveys but little meaning to anyone but a digger, so I must explain that 'prospecting' is searching for gold, and is chiefly done by old diggers. One man, or perhaps a party of two or three, pack their picks, shovels, and rations on an old horse, and dive into the bush. They are all practical geologists, and can tell by a thousand little signs whether there is any use in sinking a hole. Should the indications seem favourable, down goes a hole; when bottomed, they wash the dirt in a dish, and the result is a 'prospect' for the gold, should there be any remains in the dish. They may go on for months, until all their money is spent, sinking fruitlessly, but your true prospector is never disheartened. He will hire himself as a shepherd, or to a surveying party if he can, for with the latter he traverses a good deal of ground, and quietly jots

Digitized by Google

down, in the tablets of his memory, any likely spots to be revisited on a more favourable occasion; saving every penny, meantime, and longing for the time when he will be able to return to his darling occupapation. His thoughts are always on some prodigious find, and his sleep is broken by golden visions. So taciturn and wrapt in self is he that a casual observer might imagine him to be half a lunatic—but if he is, it is on one subject only, and that he follows up with a perseverance I have seen equalled in no other calling. On the other hand, a lucky find may recompense him for all his toil and previous disappointments. A prospecting party, on discovering payable gold, keep it quiet as long as possible, and never return to their camp by the same road twice, for fear of being watched. There are two reasons for this: first, they want to reap the golden harvest entirely themselves, if possible; secondly, should they go to the commissioner and report a new field an immediate rush to the place would ensue, and, if the expectations of the new comers were not realised, the poor prospectors would stand every chance of broken heads and hard words for having spread a false report. 'Nash,' the man who discovered the Gympie diggings, the largest and richest in Queensland, had been an unsuccessful prospector for twenty years, had been nearly killed by his hole falling in on him, and had gone through more privations and hardships than I could tell or you would care to hear about. He always worked by himself. Lonely

Digitized by Google

and solitary, with no human being near to cheer, how fearfully depressing the many disappointments he met in his career must have been. In his case perseverance met its reward, and he is now a rich man—having paid the heavy price of health, however, for his prosperity. He managed to work away for three months before he was discovered by a stockman, who took a claim next to his. The news soon got abroad, the result in less than a year being a fine town, 'Nashville,' and a flow of people and circulation of money in the colony, which propped up for a time its feeble old carcase that had been drained by that insatiable horse-leech 'High interest.'

John Hamilton's station, on Curtis Island, was named 'Monte Christo,' he himself being commonly called the Count; and he, having most kindly invited me, I took up my quarters there, whilst I rode about and prospected the several diggings, before settling which I should finally try my luck at. No place could have been better adapted for my purpose, for it was about half-way between Gladstone and Rockhampton, therefore whichever way I went I was certain of tumbling across some gold seekers. The island was a very large one, some twenty-eight by ten miles, separated from the mainland by a passage called the 'Narrows,' through which, except for a few minutes at high and low water, the tide swept with tremendous velocity. The navigation was intricate, but well beaconed, and steamers sometimes made use of it when pushed for

Digitized by Google

time. The whole of the dangerous and ever-changing Queensland rivers are surveyed with the greatest accuracy, and lighted, buoyed, and beaconed in a way I have never seen equalled elsewhere, chiefly owing to the exertions of the port master, Captain Heath, R.N., who seems ubiquitous, and whose department is a model of activity and frugality combined, from which others with a cumbersome staff and less responsibility might well take a lesson.

One great pull which the Count had over his neighbours on the mainland was that he required hardly any assistance to manage his herds. With the help of his partner and one stockman they got on to perfection, for the whole island belonged to them, and the cattle could not get away. By running a fence across, he cut off the southern end to serve as a heifer station; and the stock throve in a wonderful way, the grass being nutritious, water plentiful, and nothing to disturb them. The hut and buildings were much the same as ours at Mount M'Donnell. One advantage from their proximity to the sea was a constant supply of new books from the circulating library at Sydney, their bright bindings gladdening the eye, and pleasantly solving the riddle of how to while away the long evenings.

When it was dead low water, except during neap tides, it was possible to ford the Narrows on horseback at one particular place, commonly called the 'crossing,' the water rising to the top of the saddle; but you had to lose no time, for slack water lasted but very few

Digitized by Google

minutes. Here were camped six Chinese fishermen, who the Count had permitted to exercise their calling in his waters. The takes at each haul of the net were tremendous, and must have paid well. We went down one forenoon to have a share in the sport, and Hamilton lent them his whale-boat, into which they coiled their net—a tanned seine one hundred and twenty yards in length. A little before the last of the ebb we shoved off, and a few minutes brought us to the scene of action; when landing us on a sandy flat with one rope, they made a circuit with the boat, paying out the net as they went, and returning with the other rope; we divided into two parties, each hauling in on its own end, and gradually drawing closer together as the net was landed, until with a sally we dragged the body of the seine on shore quite full of fish. The Chinamen threw back all that weighed less than three pounds—but, even without them, in the three hauls which slack-water allowed us to make, we filled the boat up to the thwarts. A fish much resembling a salmon, with a clean-looking body and silvery scales, was most prevalent, but there were varieties of nearly every shape and size. Before the net was dragged up I had noticed several curious black switches, appearing above the surface, which puzzled me a good deal, until I discovered they were the tails of 'stingarees,' a large flat fish like a skate, with a prodigiously long tail armed near the base with three long serrated spikes, which it can raise or depress at pleasure, inflicting, if in-

Digitized by Google

cautiously handled, so painful a wound that it has been known to drive the victim out of his mind. The remedy is, to dip the wounded part in boiling fat—a toss up, I should think, which was the worse—the disease or the remedy. These fish are very troublesome in a net, for, if you haul slowly enough to give them time, they fasten on to the bottom by suction, and it takes a cart-horse to pull them off. The Chinamen managed them very cleverly when they did this, getting hold of the end of the tail, which they bit severely—the pain, I suppose, causing the fish to relax their hold, when a sudden jerk broke the spell. John Chinaman boils the liver for oil. I dried one of these tails, and plaited kangaroo hide over it for a cutting-whip, but I had forgotten to oil it, or done something wrong, for it became quite brittle, and soon broke in pieces. The Chinamen split their fish open, salted and dried them in the sun; and, when they had a sufficient quantity, loaded a small vessel they had, and took it to Rockhampton, where it was bought at once and forwarded to the diggings for the use of the Celestial population. There were a few blacks on the island, who always camped in the paddock, and were useful to take a message into Gladstone. One old gin, a shrivelled decrepit old hag, whose shrunk shanks seemed scarcely capable of supporting her old carcase, used to deliver a letter at Gladstone in the evening, if despatched in the morning from the island, the distance being forty miles for a horseman; but I suppose she

Digitized by Google

made short cuts through the mangrove swamps. Her name was a most appropriate one, 'Old Walker'! We used to send them to catch us 'eli' (crabs), in which they exhibit great ingenuity. These frequent the mud banks, among the mangroves, and, at low water, retire into holes they have dug, which are small at the entrance, but spread out inside into a spacious chamber some feet in diameter. Armed with a long pliant switch, the gins would hunt about in the thick mud until they found a likely hole, the mouth of which they enlarged with their hands, and then, kneeling down, thrust in their divining-rod and passed it all over the interior of the cave. They could tell in a moment from the feel if it was inhabited; sometimes there would be half a dozen in one hole; if so, they proceeded to stir up the crustacean with the long pole, until he became so irate that he would nip the tormenting switch with his claws, and be drawn forth in triumph. They ran to a great size, larger than most English crabs, and were very good eating.

I had bought a horse at Gladstone, and after a stay of a week with the Count, sallied forth to take my first look at the gold diggings. I left the raiment of civilised life at Monte Christo, and mounted the shirt and trousers of the bush, having no anxiety to be taken for a 'swell;' I also took but just money enough to buy myself a pick, shovel, and the few things I should want, having learnt by experience that a man never works so hard as when his next dinner depends on his

Digitized by Google

own exertion. The first diggings I came to were at Raglan Creek, only twenty-five miles from Monte Christo, and knowing the superintendent of Raglan station, I put up there whilst I looked about. It was a very small place, a quality I by no means disapprove of, and very little doing, there not being more than three hundred men at work altogether; however, want of water had a good deal to do with that. I struck up an acquaintance with a man who, from the tattooing on his arm, I knew to be a sailor, and to whom I had taken a fancy at first sight, and he readily admitted me as a partner, frankly confessing that he was making nothing just then; and through his instruction I soon became acquainted with the noble art of gold digging, which I shall explain in due course, for before I had finished I had gained plenty of practical experience. The particular branch of the profession my friend Jack Shepherd was engaged in when he and I became 'mates,' was washing hopperings, a branch which is rather looked down upon, even by old hands, as very precarious. To make myself understood by the reader I must explain that a 'hole' is about five feet in length by two in breadth, just wide enough, in fact, to work in without striking your elbows, and is sunk, keeping the sides quite perpendicular, until it is 'bottomed,' i.e. until you reach solid rock, which will bend your pick, and can get no farther, for until this is reached you have not bottomed, and cannot tell what prospect the hole contains, for on the bottom or solid

Digitized by Google

rock lies the earth which contains the precious metal, and which is called the 'wash dirt.' This is what is tested in the dish, and if there be no gold found after trying two or three dish fulls, that hole is a failure; if enough to make it worth while, the wash dirt is piled in a heap by itself until a sufficient quantity is collected to cart down to water, when the next stage commences, which is 'cradling' it. A cradle is a machine on rockers, with a perpendicular wooden handle to put it in motion; a flat copper or zinc plate, perforated with holes large enough to permit the passage of a hazel nut, ships on to the top of the machine, and this is the hopper; under this are a series of inclined planes with ripples, which are impossible to describe, but the object to be attained is the washing away the dirt, when from its greater specific gravity the gold remains behind. Into the hopper (or colander) a couple of shovel fulls of wash dirt are placed, the operator then rocks the cradle with his left hand, and keeps pouring water over the dirt from a long-handled dipper, which he plies with the right hand. The small dirt soon sinks through the holes, so after a cursory inspection of the stones left behind, the hopper is emptied, refilled with more wash, and 'da capo.' These discarded stones are termed hoppering, and the dirt washed out of the cradle is termed 'tailings,' but it was with the former that we had to do. We cradled them afresh, and examined them with the greatest attention, for in this work the only chance is the possi-

Digitized by Google

bility of finding a good sized nugget, that the original people have overlooked and thrown away. This would of course be larger than a hazel nut, or it would have passed through the holes, so a lucky find or two repays days of disappointment. It is wonderful how many good nuggets are thrown away in this manner; being perhaps coated with mud they pass unnoticed, and generally become the prey of the Chinamen who re-wash even the tailings. The first day I rocked away most indefatigably, but without any luck; on the next, however, whilst Jack was away for a few minutes, I thought I detected a dull yellow look in a muddy stone, so took it up in my hand to examine it; yes, there it was, a fat little nugget, weighing over three ounces. I was in a transport of delight, and shouted for Shepherd, who was equally pleased, but to my surprise would take no share of it, saying as it was my first find it would break my luck if he took any of it. Had he been present, he explained, he would have taken it, but were he to do so now my future prospects would be ruined, in support of which somewhat strange theory he adduced so many instances that had come under his notice in California, that I was forced to yield. Another three days, with only one very small flat piece; but by this time I had found out that my mate was a thorough good digger and a sterling honest fellow, and that he was anxious to get money enough to go on a prospecting tour, Monte Christo, strange to say, being the first place to which he wished to bend.

Digitized by Google

his steps, for he had heard that the men employed erecting the telegraph to the Pilot station at the north end of the island had discovered gold whilst sinking holes for the posts. I was getting rather tired of rocking the cradle from daylight till dark, and longing for the actual digging, instead of washing other people's refuse, besides, I thought, 'now is my chance to force upon him half of my nugget's worth, whether he will or no,' so I told him I would find the rations and he could repay me by and by. He hesitated for some time, but I told him if he wouldn't come I should get somebody else, by which means I overcame his scruples; so I invested in two new picks and shovels, the former by Jack's advice being Collins' one-armed picks, with a hammer in place of the other arm, to break up large boulders, the latter very short in the handle, which are by far the most useful, a tin prospecting-dish, and the fly of an old tent. These we carried to Raglan station that night, intending to sleep there and walk to Monte Christo the next day. I shall never forget Jack's face when, on his calling me in the morning, I asked him to help me to catch my horse: he stood aghast—

'What horse?' said he.

'Why, mine of course,' I answered; 'come along.'

He hardly knew whether I was in jest or earnest until I returned with the animal, which I proceeded to saddle while he rolled up his swag horse-collar fashion and put it on; and he would hardly believe me when I

Digitized by Google

told him to help me to pack the swags, picks, &c., on the nag, and that we would lead him; poor fellow, he had evidently been more accustomed to carry his own traps than to have a horse to help him. We had a very pleasant walk, for he had a thousand Californian and Victorian digging anecdotes to tell me, and the true prospector peeped out in the way he would stop and examine all sorts of places, explaining to me the different signs which indicate an auriferous country. His own story was that of hundreds of men to be met with on a diggings. The son of a lieutenant in the coast guard, who must have been fond of his bottle, his mother died when he was quite a child, and his father married again. Then came the old tale—ill-treatment by the stepmother, indifferent education; bound apprentice in a merchant ship as soon as he was old enough; life in California, where he deserted, happening to be there in a ship when the first gold was discovered; then some years at the Victorian diggings; latterly Queensland—a strange life, full of vicissitudes, hair-breadth escapes, and ups and downs, sometimes throwing money away, at others penniless, but always managing to fall on his legs, and just as happy and confident now, after sixteen years following the pick, as the first day he put one into the ground. The Count seemed rather surprised to hear that there was gold on his island, but afforded us every facility to carry out our search, so we pitched our camp on a ridge near some gullies which Jack pronounced

Digitized by Google

likely. The next day we spent in fossicking about to find out the dip of the quartz-reef, and having satisfactorily determined this, we commenced sinking our first hole. Then I began to discover that digging was not so easy as it looked; my back ached to such a degree and my hands became so blistered that I thought I should have to give in. It was Jack's presence alone which stimulated me, and indeed he did three times as much work as I did, and seemingly without exertion, though I was the stronger man of the two. I was so awkward when the hole got a little deep, knocking my elbows about against the sides, and throwing the dirt perpendicularly into the air, instead of clear of the hole, whence it descended in a shower on to my back, thus my labour was about as productive as that of Sisyphus. Our first hole we bottomed at six feet, tried a dish or two, without even a speck, so went farther down and sunk again, and so on for a fortnight, during which time we sunk about a dozen holes, varying from four to twenty-four feet in depth, but without getting even the 'colour,' and by this time our picks were worn down so much, and had become so blunt, that it was evident we must find some way to sharpen them if we intended to go on. We were in hopes they would have an anvil and a pair of bellows at the station, so went there, but found neither, the Count sending all blacksmith's work to Gladstone by boat, whereupon Jack, always ready in an emergency, said we must make a 'fanner.' Had he said make a

Digitized by Google

balloon I should have mildly acquiesced, for what a fanner was I had not the most remote conception. On asking the Count what carpenter's tools he could lend us, we found there was only a tomahawk and an old broken-down morticing chisel. These, however, quite contented my mate, who forthwith led me captive to the grindstone, and made me turn away until I wished the unknown animal, the fanner, was anywhere, he getting an edge on the chisel the while. I ventured to suggest with becoming humility that he had better sharpen the picks in the same way, for the grindstone handle had now become familiar to me, and I could have wound it round with resignation for another day or two, but my proposal was met with such a look of pity for my ignorance that I subsided, and applied myself to rotary motion with redoubled vigour. How shall I describe the instrument we turned out after two days' work? Four fans inside a box, one end of which was funnel-shaped, and passed into the stone forge we built, in the same way as the nozzle of a blacksmith's bellows, the fanners being revolved with great rapidity by a green hide band, which was fitted to a large wheel erected in rear of the box containing the fans. Morticed into the rough nave were sticks, like spokes, forked at the end to catch and turn the band, but although it proved invaluable, it is next to impossible to describe the apparatus we succeeded in manufacturing. It answered most admirably; and a substitute for an anvil being made

Digitized by Google

by sinking an iron wedge into the stump of a tree, Jack, being cunning in the art of pointing and tempering picks, soon had ours in splendid order, and having our own forge we were able to resharpen them every day if necessary. On a regular diggings the blacksmiths do little else, getting threepence a point. We now shifted our camp and tried again, but uselessly. It was quite evident we had been taken in by the telegraph men; perhaps they found some mica or iron pyrites, which are frequently mistaken for the genuine metal by new hands, and were deceived themselves. In any case we had lost six weeks' time and trouble, and we came to the conclusion that the sooner we left this unprofitable locality the better, so giving the fanner to the Count as a 'souvenir,' we took our departure, intending to prospect between Gladstone and Maryborough, which country report spoke of as being likely ground for gold.

We stopped the first night at Mount Bunkum, a station on which, a couple of years before, every white man but one had been murdered by the blacks. The superintendent, who had been absent for the day when the massacre took place and thus escaped, told me an instance of the small sense of pain the blacks must possess. A large number of the whites pursued the murderers, and I have no doubt gave a good account of most of them. However, a week afterwards a black boy named Billy who had been employed on Mount Bunkum made his appearance at the hut door as the

Digitized by Google

superintendent was sitting down to tea, holding his hand to his chest, and looking very ill.

'Why, Billy, what matter 'long of you?' he asked.

'Mr. G. been shoot me,' he answered, and removing his hand showed a hole into which you could have thrust two fingers, the orifice being stuffed full of mud, a remedy which enters largely into the aboriginal *materia medica.* On being further questioned, he said he had joined the blacks after the murder, and knowing he would be suspected tried to escape, when a party of the whites overtook him, and as he succinctly stated, 'Mr. G. been shot him,' and went on to say: 'When mine fall down, another fellow come, stop yarroman, and been say, Baal that fellow bong, shoot him plenty time more. Oh my word! cobbon I lay still, plenty gammon bong!' After they had ridden away he crawled to a water-hole where mud was in abundance, stuffed the hole up, and made his way to Mount Bunkum, concluding his narrative by a gentle hint that 'plenty thirsty this fellow, small drop like it brandy.' He recovered in a wonderfully short time; certainly mud must have virtues beyond those it is credited with. Poor Billy! he came to grief afterwards at Rockhampton, breaking in a young horse, when he smashed his leg beyond the curative powers even of mud, and may be seen strutting about rather proud of his wooden substitute.

It would be wearisome were I to describe our movements in detail. We passed through the deserted

Digitized by Google

Calliope diggings, past the abandoned copper works at Iveragh, and made our way slowly towards Maryborough, a distance of about two hundred and fifty miles, not keeping any track, but heading south, stopping for a week at a place if we thought it likely, making just what stages suited us, and leading altogether a very happy life, had it been more remunerative. We used to get a quantity of flour, tea, sugar, and salt beef, and pack it on my horse, so we were quite independent of stations, and rarely went near them except when it was necessary to replenish our store. Thus we were away a couple of months more, doing no actual good, for though we nearly always found the colour it was not in sufficient quantity to pay for working. However, Jack was untiring and as sanguine as ever, making certain every evening that by next sunset we should have opened out a second Ophir, have gained the thousand pounds reward offered by Government to the discoverer of a payable field, have become the possessors of a reef rich beyond precedent, and —— Where will a prospector's *châteaux en Espagne* stop? I only wish one tithe of his predictions had been verified.

One morning I left Jack camped, and rode into a station on the Burnett River, where I had directed my letters to be forwarded; and there heard first of the Gympie rush, and saw several men during the short time I was there, who were wending their way to the new field as fast as their own or their horses'

Digitized by Google

legs would carry them. I returned at once to Jack, and we resolved *nem. con.* to go there. I was compelled to go to Maryborough about some money matters, and as that would be out of the direct line to Gympie we continued together as far as our roads would permit, when he walked on to secure a claim, and I rode to Maryborough, where I hoped to finish my business in a day or two, and reach Gympie by the time he had selected a good piece of ground. Never was such a scene as Maryborough presented when I arrived there; two or three steamers a day coming from the south and landing hundreds of diggers from each; the town almost deserted except by the storekeepers, who had more on their hands than they could possibly get through. The eager arrivals made no stay, passing on at once, whatever the time might be, the road to Gympie, which was more than sixty miles away, presenting an almost unbroken flow of travellers from daylight till dark. Knowing that I stood every chance of having my horse stolen, for I should be unable to look after him, I sold him at a good profit and started on foot, joining myself to one of the numerous parties wending their way thither. No introduction or ceremony of that kind is needed in the bush. 'Good morning, mate,' is sufficient passport to enable you to share food and shelter with any fellow traveller, and it is an understood thing that no questions are ever asked. On the morning of the third day we entered the only street of Nashville: the

Digitized by Google

buildings were either tents or bark humpies, not more then than two dozen in number, but springing up with the greatest rapidity daily; but of these certainly sixteen were grog-shops, all the stores retailing spirits. The scene was animated in the extreme, and the banks of the Mary River and any place where there was water were crowded with tents. I could not find Jack for two days, but on meeting he told me he had pegged out a very promising claim, and took me to the tent which I was glad enough to find, having rolled myself up on the floor of a store hitherto. Gympie Creek diggings have been so often and so much better described that I shall say no more about them. Our claim turned out pretty well, and when I left it after four months, I sold my share for one hundred and forty pounds, and had washed out a couple of hundred more. We bottomed at about fourteen feet, and then had to drive, that is, tunnel in all directions, using timber to prop up the earth overhead. The wash dirt we raised with a windlass erected over the shaft. If sinking is laborious, driving is much more so, for you have to work lying on your side, and the heat is stifling, besides the chance of the earth caving in and burying you. At the termination of the four months, the straggling little street had grown half a mile long, with good weatherbound buildings, shops, banks, a theatre, Christy Minstrels, &c. The population were very orderly, rows being of rare occurrence, and the bulk of the diggers always siding with the authorities.

Digitized by Google

The seventh day was strictly observed as far as not working was concerned, but the shops drove their best trade then, most of the men putting off purchasing until that day, for they were nearly sure to meet old friends on the same errand, and could have a chat and compare notes. I think I may say that Sunday is devoted to gossip and nobblers. One open-air preacher I heard, but his audience did not seem so much impressed as amused; there was, however, no rowdyism or attempt to interrupt him, and when he sent the hat round the men gave freely and largely. It is wonderful in a mixed assembly such as this with what perfect immunity you can leave your tent. We left ours after breakfast and never came near it again until dark; and my gold watch was always hanging up, and was never interfered with, although plenty of people knew it was there; for it was by special desire of the inhabitants of the neighbouring tents—some of whom had their wives with them—that I left it in this exposed position. They used to peep in and see the hour, but never touched anything. Neither do you ever think of bringing your tools home at night, leaving them in your hole, be it deep or shallow; and I never heard of any being stolen. Saturday afternoon is observed by most diggers as a half-holiday: at least, they only dig during the forenoon, employing the remainder of the day in washing and mending their clothes, collecting firewood for the ensuing week, and such-like odd jobs. On Sunday an extra sleep is admissible, and

Digitized by Google

you generally take it out until the sun, striking through the thin duck, roasts you out. After the first month the price of rations was reasonable enough, the competition being so great that each storekeeper tried to undersell his neighbour: meat had always been cheap, twopence or three halfpence a pound.

All diggers have a horror of Chinamen, though I doubt if half of them could tell you for what reason; and should any unfortunate Celestials show their flat faces and squinting eyes on a gold field, a cry of 'roll up' passes from hole to hole, up come the occupants, and if Johnny is not wise enough to beat a hasty retreat he stands every chance of a bloody coxcomb. They are most adroit thieves, and will counterfeit to perfection, which most probably is the origin of the ill-feeling against them. However, Johnny is not easily discouraged, usually starting a market garden, in the management of which he exhibits wonderful skill, and contrives the most curious methods of irrigation,—until some claims being deserted by their proprietors he steps in unquestioned and works them all over again.

I used often to watch the men at work in Nash's claim, which was very large, the prospector being allowed two hundred feet frontage to a creek or river, whereas an ordinary man is only permitted to hold forty. He had grown too great a man to work himself, and employed half a dozen people at good wages working his piece of ground. I have seen them just turning over

Digitized by Google

the surface stones and picking up the solid gold in their fingers, a tempting sight to the owner of a 'shicer.' The alluvial diggings ran out in the course of eight or ten months, during which time there were numberless rushes to other places, but all of them within twenty miles of Gympie; in fact, the whole country was highly auriferous. An ex-tobacconist took a claim from some people during a holiday he gave himself, and found a nugget weighing a thousand ounces, but his right to it was contested. Before I left, a good many very rich quartz reefs were discovered, some of them of extraordinary richness, these are likely to yield a handsome return to their owners for years. Some blocks which I saw it was hard to know whether to speak of as quartz and gold or gold and quartz, so equally were the two divided.

Because it was my good luck to make a little during the last four of my eight months' gold-digging, I hope the reader will not run away with the idea that everybody was equally fortunate, for hundreds of people were only 'making their tucker'—that is, getting enough to buy themselves rations—whilst thousands were not even doing as much as that, but crept away disheartened and penniless, the gap being at once filled by fresh comers. These poor fellows that luck seems always against are never heard of, while one fortunate man is talked about all over the place. The whole thing is a lottery, and a losing one in the long run; I am convinced, that in its uncertainty lies its charm;

Digitized by Google

but for one digger (in the proper acceptation of the term) who makes a 'pile,' nine hundred and ninety-nine lose everything. Strange to say, money that is acquired in this manner seldom seems to stay by its owner; neither can an old digger settle down, but gets as restless on hearing of a rush as an old charger at a trumpet call. A man with plenty of capital and a long head can make a great deal by buying shares in reefs, setting up crushing machines, &c., but I maintain that following the pick as a profession is uncomfortable and unprofitable, besides totally unfitting you for anything else ever afterwards.

I returned to Maryborough on foot, having transmitted my gold through the commissioner; and, having three or four days to wait for the steamer, I thought I would go to some old boiling-down buildings, a couple of miles out of the town, and see a fight between the Wide Bay and Brisbane blacks, which took place annually in the deserted paddock of that establishment. They had been mustering for some days, the Brisbane blacks having a good long journey to perform to reach the rendezvous. Whilst I was strolling out, numbers of them passed me, all flocking to the scene of action, and splendid-looking men some of them were, with busts like bronze Hercules'—the shoulders and back ornamented with lumps about three-quarters of an inch in length, and less than that distance from each other, arranged in a rude kind of pattern. To obtain these marks they cut themselves and stuff the wound with

Digitized by Google

'mud,' which prevents the edges from reuniting cleanly. They mustered about three hundred fighting men on each side, irrespective of the gins and piccaninnies, the two parties being camped a quarter of a mile from each other.

Lest the reader should wonder at my going with impunity amongst armed blacks, I must explain that these were all civilised (save the expression!), could all talk English, and did little odds and ends for the townspeople and settlers at other times, but I suppose had hit upon this way of satisfying their natural thirst for blood, without getting into trouble with the whites. Each man was armed with a shield, spear, nullah-nullah or club, and several boomerangs, flat curved pieces of hard wood which, I have no doubt, are familiar to the reader—these are very erratic in their flight, and, if not stopped, return to nearly the spot from whence they were thrown—and which are carried by the gins, who esquire their lords and masters, picking up and handing their weapons to them. I could not exactly understand how the combat commenced, for I knew the boomerangs too well to trust myself very near; but, after a great deal of vociferation and abuse, a few came to blows, and in a wonderfully short time they were all hard at work, jumping, yelling, writhing their bodies in the most extraordinary way to permit the spears to pass them, and showing a quickness of eye that I have never before seen exhibited. One party would launch a perfect shower of missiles, boomerangs,

Digitized by Google

spears, and nullah-nullahs at some adverse champion, who managed to ward off with his shield, twist his body, and jump up in a way that enabled him to escape them all. It soon grew tedious; and I was going away, when a truce was called, and they retired to their several camps, the Brisbanites having lost one man, whom they carried away with them. In the evening they had a grand corrobbery or dance, and I believe the fight was renewed the next day. A great many of the inhabitants go out to see these tournaments; and the encouragement the blacks meet with in the way of nobblers and sixpences makes them look forward to the event with much satisfaction. They used to eat the dead a few years ago, for, when I was first at Maryborough, I saw part of a roasted hand, of which they graciously offered a bite to the curious spectators, and they carried the skin of the defunct warrior about the town on a pole, and made a harvest of sixpences by the interesting exhibition. A number of the inhabitants went to see the cannibal orgie, amongst whom were several ladies! The 'Maryborough Chronicle' had, I remember, a very stinging article on the latter appearing at such a scene. It is quite enough our men encouraging such brutality by their presence, but the idea of ladies flocking to see a camp of nude savages devour one of their number is too indelicate and repulsive to be thought of. The mounted police sometimes take part in these *mêlées*, laying aside their carbines, and fighting fair with shield and waddy;

Digitized by Google

but on one occasion, their adversaries getting the better, they equalised the combat by a judicious use of fire-arms, picking off two or three opponents who had shown themselves particularly active; and, having thus restored the balance, the fight continued as before.

On returning to Brisbane, I found the whole place in a rabid state of excitement at the anticipated visit of the Duke of Edinburgh, who was then at Melbourne, and, after visiting Sydney, was to come to Queensland for a few days. One thing about the Australians that their greatest enemy would hardly dare to impugn, is their loyalty: they will stick to the Old Country, of which they are so justly proud, and which all, even native born, speak of as 'home,' as long as the Old Country cares to retain them; and their reception of Her Majesty's second son, wherever he went, must have been gratifying both to himself and the nation, notwithstanding the lamentable *contretemps* that endangered his life and curtailed his first visit. In Brisbane this most praiseworthy spirit grew to be almost ridiculous, from the squabbling amongst the Reception Committee and other local bodies, as to who should receive him, how the greatest number of *levées*, addresses, &c., could be included in the four days he proposed to spend in Queensland, and to what spot on the Darling Downs he should be hurried, for all parties agreed that it was indispensable he should risk his neck in the new plaything, the railway. The Governor and

Digitized by Google

the Premier, who, if left to themselves would have arranged everything in a becoming manner, were worried out of their lives by the numerous and astounding propositions made by worthy citizens brimming over with hospitality and loyalty. All wanted to *fête* him, but none would hear of other than himself being the host. Then took place the battle of the ball-room, for the citizens were bent on giving a ball, but could by no means settle in what edifice it was to be held, the town-hall being unsafe. So the newspapers took opposite sides, and the battle raged furiously, one party saying 'Who ever heard of turning a cellar into a ball-room?' the other expressing grave doubts whether 'men of sense would think of giving a dance in a loft'—which cutting remarks had reference to the only two suitable buildings—being entered, the one by ascending, the other by descending a flight of stairs. Eventually the 'cellar' carried the day, and peace was restored; or, it would be more correct to say, warfare was swallowed up in anticipation. The programme settled on for the day of landing was somewhat as follows, and savours rather of hard labour than pleasure for the illustrious guest and his suite. Land at eleven, drive slowly round the principal streets to Government House; at one, luncheon; at two, a *levée*; at four, Highland sports; at six, fireworks; at seven, a dinner; at nine, a concert; and then a ball. Not a bad day's work for a navvy to get through, I should imagine; and the other three were, if possible, harder, varied by

Digitized by Google

the trip to the Downs by the interesting railway, which, as there was nothing to see or do at its termination, except to yawn over the thoughts of facing the dismal array of gum-trees on the return journey, could hardly have been fraught with interest. A triumphal arch was erected opposite the landing-stage, which would have looked heavy enough, had not P. thought of sending up half a dozen black fellows, in their 'possum rugs and war paint, whose dusky figures and long spears standing out in bold relief against the sky-line, rendered the unsightly fabric a great success. The smartest of the native mounted police had been selected, well-fitting uniforms and good horses given to them, and these acted as a body-guard wherever the Duke went, and looked remarkably smart and well. The whole visit was a great success, happiness and enjoyment being visible everywhere, a contrast to the aspect of the town when, a few days later, news arrived of the attempted assassination of His Royal Highness at Clontarf, each passer-by looked gravely into his neighbour's face as though some personal misfortune had befallen him; Government House was besieged by eager enquirers, and the bulletins were looked forward to with the greatest anxiety. One publican, with Fenian proclivities, was rash enough to hoist a green flag with a harp on it when he heard of the cowardly attempt, but his doctor's and glazier's bill must have been tolerably heavy the next day, for his head and every pane of glass in his house were

Digitized by Google

broken within five minutes. Indignation meetings were held at all the principal towns. I was present at the one held at Brisbane, when the principal citizens spoke, and universal sympathy was expressed for the royal sufferer. One gentleman, Mr. D., in speaking of the Fenians, made use of words somewhat to this effect—additional force being conveyed in them from the deliberate mode of speaking—'Hiding behind bridges to shoot defenceless policemen, committing murder in a cowardly and dastardly way—are these things to be proud of? I tell you, the corpses of the gallant Irishmen who cumber every battle-field of Europe will rise in their bloody shrouds and cry shame on their recreant countrymen.' This told home to some of his hearers, for he received several menacing letters, acquainting him that his death had been determined on.

Sugar was now attracting a great deal of attention; several plantations in the neighbourhood of Brisbane had been established and worked with great success, prominently those of Messrs. Hope, and Whish and Trevilian. The land adjacent to Moreton Bay, and the Mary and Mackay Rivers, was pronounced admirably adapted to the growth of the cane by experienced planters from Mauritius, Demarara, and elsewhere, the result of Mr. Louis Hope's experiment fully confirming their opinion. He planted two acres at Cleveland, twenty miles from the capital, in the direction of the bay, and with such success that he rapidly increased

Digitized by Google

the plantation, and erected machinery for the manufacture of sugar, the produce of one acre being three tons of sugar and nearly a ton of molasses, the former valued at thirty-six pounds per ton. This stimulated others, and a company was formed both at Brisbane and Maryborough; and, the Legislature having passed an Act permitting individuals to take up blocks of not less than 640 nor more than 1,280 acres for this particular produce, at a rental of one shilling per acre for three years, with a right of purchase at one pound per acre at the termination of that period, many plantations sprung up along the coast as far north as Cleveland and Rockingham Bay. Many farmers on the Brisbane and Mary rivers put some of their rich cleared scrub-land under cane, the growth exceeding all anticipation, but at first with but little profit to themselves, the two or three crushing-mills devouring the larger share; floods also sometimes swept the plantation so completely that a farmer has been unable to recognise the coating of yellow mud left when the water subsided as his once flourishing homestead; labour was expensive and scarce: but these were all difficulties which time would remove—the most important fact, the adaptability of the climate and soil to the cultivation of sugar was established beyond dispute. Before the lapse of many years thousands of acres of the richest land, which now lies too low for cultivation, will be reclaimed; for either the sea is receding or the land is rising on the eastern coast of Australia, a great dif-

Digitized by Google

ference being perceptible within the memory of many inhabitants of Brisbane. At the close of the year 1868, it was computed that there were 3,433 acres of land under cultivation with sugar-cane, ten mills at work, and the produce of crushings up to that date amounted to 619 tons of sugar and 68,622 gallons of molasses. During 1869, it was expected that seventeen additional mills and six distilleries would be erected, and it is stated that arrangements are in course of completion in England for the erection of sugar factories adequate to the requirements of the localities, thus securing to small holders every facility for the disposal of their cane at the highest remunerative prices, without the cost and risk of erecting their own machinery. During 1868, the six distilleries in the colony produced 47,641 gallons of rum; whilst the imports into Queensland, principally from Mauritius, amounted to 3,277 tons of sugar, 56,532 gallons of rum, and 4,661 gallons of molasses; by which it will be seen that the rum manufactured in the colony bears a large proportion to the total consumption, whilst the molasses far exceed the quantity imported. The preceding figures are extracted from the Government Report on Sugar Cultivation in Queensland, dated March 1869, and are as reliable as can be got.

Going with Lucy to stay at a plantation belonging to a friend of ours, we both took a great fancy to the kind of life; and though the above report from which I have quoted had not been yet compiled, it being only the

Digitized by Google

middle of 1865, yet the whole scheme of sugar growing seemed so certain to succeed, now that the difficulties of labour were, comparatively speaking, overcome by the introduction of Coolie labour on a large scale, the excitement with regard to it was so great—not to speak of the charms of a settled life after the knocking about we had undergone—that we determined to embark in it should a favourable opportunity present itself. This soon occurred; and I started for Rockingham Bay, Cardwell, or Port Hinchinbrook, as it is indifferently called, resolved to take up the block of 1,280 acres showed me on the map at the Survey Office, should I find it answer to the description—for I need scarcely say I was too old a *soldier* to buy or lease without first looking. Lucy remained in Brisbane until I either returned or wrote her instructions.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER X.

SUGAR PLANTING.

BEFORE taking the reader to the far north, I will endeavour to give some description of the produce raised by small farmers on the agricultural reserves and on the banks of the rivers, where the scrub land, if once cleared, has been found most excellent for the growth of garden stuffs, fruits, &c., not inclusive of cotton and sugar, which will be briefly treated of by themselves. Agricultural reserves are large blocks of several thousands acres, which have been selected by Mr. Walter Hill, who is director of the Botanical Gardens and also bears the title of Selector of Reserves. Of these there are many in the colony, so an intending farmer will find no difficulty in getting a homestead, more particularly since the passing of the new Land Act, which throws open to the agriculturist a vast area of country which was before sealed to him. As this Act is most liberal, and is expected to induce a number of small capitalists to settle down under their own vine and fig-tree, I will explain its leading features, premising that its greatest advantage over the old Acts

Digitized by Google

is the security of tenure it gives to the farmer, the doubtfulness of which under the former *régime* often operated largely in deterring settlers from building and improving. By it the whole colony has been divided into two districts, the '*settled*' and the '*unsettled.*' The former are the districts which are principally affected by the 'Crown Lands Alienation Act,' and may be estimated as containing over fifty-one millions of acres, inclusive of all land that is good for anything except pastoral purposes. Most of the settled districts have been hitherto under lease to the squatter, who paid rent according to the grazing capabilities of his land, which leases were from time to time renewed. The present Act proposes to resume the whole of each run at the expiration of twelve months; but if the lessee is willing to come under the provisions of the Act (which he cannot help), he will be allowed a lease of *half* his run for ten years, the Government resuming the other (and best) half for selection, under the terms of the Act, by intending settlers, or, as they are usually called, 'free selectors.' The Act deals with different descriptions of land, such as mineral, gold fields, &c., but as these would be of no interest whatever to the intending farmer or the general reader, I shall confine myself to the three classes most in request, viz. conditional purchases, homesteads, and coffee and sugar leases. By 'conditional purchase' —which is an entirely new principle in the colonies— land can be purchased at lower rates and on easier terms

Digitized by Google

of payment; larger areas can be secured, enabling agricultural and pastoral pursuits to combine in one selection; and the land is classified, thus making the purchase-money proportionate to its value. The selector has certain conditions to fulfil, introduced to prevent an undue monopoly, to guard against speculation, and guarantee the land being used *bonâ fide* for the purpose intended. The lands open to settlement are—

Firstly. The Crown lands in the settled districts not under lease or license.

Secondly. The lands on the resumed halves of runs, inclusive of the railway reserves, which extend three miles on each side of the railway lines throughout their entire length.

Thirdly. The lands in large township reserves, not less than two miles in a direct line from the nearest town lot offered for sale.

These lands constitute the area available for selection under the Act, an area which, in the gross, is twice as large as Ireland. The areas allowed to be selected by any one person, and the rates of the purchase money, per acre, are as follows:

Agricultural land, not less than 40 nor more than 640 acres at 15*s.* per acre. First-class pastoral land, not less than 80 nor more than 2,560 acres, at 10*s.* per acre, or an annual rent of 1*s.* per acre. Second-class pastoral land, not less than 80 nor more than 7,680 acres, at 5*s.* per acre, or an annual rent of 6*d.* per acre.

Digitized by Google

By this it will be seen that an individual could, if the land was of a nature to justify the classifications, obtain 10,880 acres in one unbroken piece, either paying for it '*en masse*,' when he at once gets the title-deeds, or paying the annual rental, as stated above, when, at the expiration of ten years, he has the title-deeds handed over to him, and it becomes his own freehold property. This method of paying by instalments, under the name of rent, is one of the wisest courses the Government could possibly have adopted, for it does not involve a preliminary outlay on a small capitalist, and gives him an interest in his farm which he knows will be *his own* by and by, and there is more in the term '*his own*' than is generally imagined. I believe every man has an innate desire to own some place, to be able to speak of 'home,' though that home may only be a bark humpie.

Homesteads.—The clause of the Act under this head being imported from America, some anxiety is shown as to its result. It has for its object the enabling people of small means to obtain land on the most favourable terms, and is intended for the class of people who would be unable to comply with the terms of the 'conditional purchase' clause. It allows any head of a family, or of twenty-one years old, to take up 80 acres of agricultural, or 160 acres of pastoral land, the same being open to selection, on payment annually for five years at the rate of ninepence an acre for the former and sixpence for the latter description of land. Certain

Digitized by Google

conditions are imposed, as declaration that it is intended for his or her sole use; residence during the five years is required, and a certain amount of cultivation or fencing, but the terms are just and liberal, and the conditions less than a man would do of his own accord. He may, on proof of two years' residence and the necessary cultivation or fencing, obtain his title-deeds then on paying the upset price of the land; thus he would under this clause become possessed of agricultural land at 3*s.* 9*d.* per acre, and of pastoral at 2*s.* 6*d.* With regard to residence great latitude is allowed, a man's wife or children count for himself in this respect, and, furthermore, lands acquired under this clause do not become liable to the satisfaction of any debts contracted prior to the issuing of the Crown grant or title deeds. By which the reader will see that the framers of this most comprehensive Act have done all in their power to induce people to cultivate the soil without let or hindrance.

Sugar and coffee leases.—Any applicant for land, within ten miles from the coast or a navigable river, who states that he intends to use it for the cultivation of sugar or coffee, shall be allowed to select a block of agricultural land of not less than 320 acres nor more than 1,280 acres; and on proof of having cultivated one-tenth the land under either of these, within three years, he shall be relieved from the obligation of residence, but in other respects shall be as any other conditional purchaser.

Digitized by Google

Such are the leading features of the new Act. Every facility has been given the settler to obtain his land without loss of time or trouble, and it is so framed that the smallest equally with the largest capitalist may find all he requires under some one of its clauses. To the squatter it has not done so much mischief as was anticipated, for though half their runs are resumed, no free selector will ever meddle with them whilst the banks of rivers can be obtained. Some of course have suffered by the land round permanent water being taken up and fenced in, thus making a large tract of country useless, but as a rule they are not much worse off than they were before. Their day is gone, and with or without free selection they could never drag on much longer. Supplying Europe with meat is the only thing that will save them now.

In selecting a piece of ground many things have to be considered, prominently, the quality of the soil, situation as regards conveyance of produce, whether there be a good road or water-carriage. The density of the timber must be borne in mind, for the cost of clearing is very considerable, in some instances as high as 15*l.* an acre, so it is advisable to get a piece as free from trees as possible, provided the land be good, though it is very bad policy selecting land from its openness alone, for good soil which requires some outlay in clearing will be found less expensive in the end. Market gardens are very profitable if in the vicinity of a town; thus some Germans who have established

Digitized by Google

themselves on Kedron Brook, a few miles out of Brisbane, do very well, as also some of the small farmers up the river. Their chief products are arrowroot—which yields about 1½ ton per acre, valued at 50*l.* per ton; lucerne, common English vegetables, cabbage, spinach, onions, and so forth; sweet potatoes, which thrive most luxuriantly but are difficult to get rid of should the ground be required for other purposes; and pumpkins, which attain an enormous size. All these obtain a ready market. In the way of fruit the gardener can do almost anything with a little trouble; the pineapple, banana, peach, and melon, grow in astonishing profusion. What would they say in England to feeding the pigs on peaches? Melons, Cape gooseberry, grapes, passion fruit, chilis, capsicums, cherrimoyas, mulberries, there is no end to them, and all requiring a minimum of attention. The culture of the grape and wine-growing ought to pay well, and I dare say will be started before long.

The scarcity of cotton during the American war turned the attention of people to its growth in Queensland, and was the cause of the first experiments after the soil and climate had been pronounced suitable. Government recognised it at once as a possible source of future wealth, and inserted a clause in the Land Act of 1860 to the effect that during the next three years after the passing of the Act, land orders to the extent of ten pounds by way of premium should be issued for every bale of 300 lbs. of good Sea Island

Digitized by Google

cotton grown in the colony and exported to Great Britain; and that during the next two years following the three years above mentioned, a premium of five pounds should be given; and during said periods one-half the above premiums should be given for the common description of cotton. Regulations were also passed in 1861 bestowing large blocks of country of not less than 640 acres upon capitalists or companies who would commence cotton cultivation on a large scale, upon condition that within two years a stated sum had been expended on the land in the growth of cotton. Under these regulations the companies now existing commenced their enterprise, and the inducements, combined with the high price offered, caused many proprietors to bring their land under cotton. A succession of bad seasons which spoilt the crops, and the difficulty of finding labour at picking time, disheartened many, and I do not think it will ever come to be a product of great importance.

I went up as far as Cleveland Bay by the A. S. N. Co.'s steamers, and this being their terminus I had to finish my journey in a little paddle-wheel craft of fifty tons, whose build resembled a bar of soap and was altogether the most unsafe nondescript I ever set foot on board, and I can hardly even except the canoe that we used in crossing the Bowen. Her crew consisted of a captain, mate, engineer, and half a dozen Kanakas or South Sea Island boys. Accommodation she did not pretend to possess, and passengers of whatever sex

Digitized by Google

had to pig it out as best they could. Some months afterwards I met the engineer in Cardwell, and he asked me where he could find any fresh cowdung. I could not help expressing my surprise at his being in need of such an article until he told me he wanted it to patch up the holes in the boiler, when my astonishment was changed into fervent delight that I was not to be a passenger in her. On this occasion she refused to leave Cleveland Bay, and nothing would persuade the wheels to revolve until the Kanakas started them with their feet, when she reluctantly proceeded and took over twenty-four hours to do the trip, though the distance was under a hundred miles. The harbour is a most beautiful one, formed by one large and several other groups of smaller islands, which with the great Barrier Reef constitute a most secure anchorage. I have seen all the celebrated harbours, Rio, Sydney, Trincomalee, &c., but none that struck me as having such capabilities as Rockingham Bay. The southern portion is protected by Hinchinbrook Island, which is nearly forty miles in length and covered with towering mountains of volcanic origin, between which and the mainland there is a channel with plenty of water, though a bar at the south end prevents its being made use of except by small vessels. These high mountains on Hinchinbrook—rugged and bare at their summits, but becoming clothed lower down, until at their base they are one ever-green mass of tropical vegetation growing in more than its wonted luxuriance in the

Digitized by Google

water-courses hollowed out by the mountain torrents—present a scene of beauty unequalled in Australia; and from the depth permitting a vessel of any magnitude to lie alongside, would afford a secure watering place should the Torres Strait route ever become permanently established, an event which must happen ere long. On the mainland, at the distance of three miles from the coast, rises a range of fifteen hundred feet in height, nearly perpendicular, densely wooded with a wealth of vegetation unknown elsewhere on this continent, and having at intervals along its summit lakes of vast depth, so deep that I have seen tall pine-trees, blown down by hurricanes or submerged by landslips, barely showing their lofty crests above the surface; the water itself so cool and grateful even on the hottest day, that the refreshing draught it affords, combined with the glory of the view, amply recompenses the weary climber for his previous exertions. The little township, comprising but a dozen or so of houses, is built close to the beach, and from its tropical appearance looks most picturesque. The first impression that Rockingham Bay always creates on a visitor is the extraordinary difference in vegetation it presents to any other township in Australia. Here you find trees which, unlike those commonly in vogue, afford a little shade, and the wild banana, which five years before the time of which I write was unknown to exist and a reward of fifty pounds offered to any man who could discover one, is seen in this favoured spot growing not

Digitized by Google

by twos or threes but by the acre. The soil on which the town stands is decomposed granite in small globules, intermixed with black dust, and from its sterile appearance would hardly warrant the belief that aught but stunted gum-tree scrub would eke out a precarious existence, yet its fertility is incredible, any kind of shrub or vegetable that can stand the heat thriving in a wonderful way. The beach is of sand, and close to the sea, which their broad leafy boughs overhang, affording a most grateful shade, stand several large trees with splendid leaves growing in the natural way instead of in the provoking slant peculiar to the Australian flora. For these I never heard a colonial name, but the botanical one is *Calophyllum inophyllum.* They were always spoken of by the inhabitants as the 'big trees.' The truth being that Dr. Mueller, the eminent Victorian botanist, sent one of his staff to Cardwell, who having once unguardedly let drop the many-syllabled wonder, the astonished residents hardly dared for some time to approach the objects of their veneration, which they now conceived must possess some untold value, or science would scarcely have been at the pains to bestow on them such a high-sounding cognomen. Anywhere on the beach near these trees by digging with a pint pot, you could get beautiful fresh water, filtered through the decomposed granite until as clear as crystal, even though the tide had covered the spot where you sank ten minutes before, and the sea was then not more than two feet from you,

Digitized by Google

it made no difference, the water that filled the hole was equally sweet and free from salt, and its depth from the surface may be imagined when I say that the dogs belonging to the town used to come down and scratch a hole whenever they wanted a drink. This constant underground current of water must have resulted from the drainage of the lakes at the summit of the range immediately in rear of the town, and no doubt contributed largely towards the prodigality of the soil. I must not, however, weary the reader by a dry description of the place, but will endeavour to bring to his notice its many peculiarities as my story proceeds.

Twenty miles to the northward of Cardwell, and twelve miles inland, on the bank of a river of considerable size, which emptied itself into Rockingham Bay, named the 'Murray,' stood the plantation on which it was my intention to cast in my lot. It consisted of 1,280 acres, and a good deal of pastoral land for grazing the cattle and horses. This country was certainly most excellent, in fact unsurpassable, consisting as it did of miles and miles of black soil plain—soil teeming with richness—without a stick of timber, and with large lagoons scattered at intervals, besides a fine river running through its centre. Never was seen such a lovely spot to a planter's eye. No clearing, no trouble of any kind, there was the rich virgin soil only waiting for the plough, and it would return hundredfold the care bestowed upon it. John Ewen, with

Digitized by Google

whom I had entered into partnership, had discovered this lovely spot two years before, and had been making great improvements, by draining, &c., and now, as soon as our Polynesian labourers arrived, we could begin to plant, and by the time the crushing machinery had reached its destination and been erected the cane would be ready for it. The blacks had been very daring and troublesome during his stay, having on three several occasions attacked the place, when they were with difficulty repulsed, and even now were spearing the cattle and horses, and doing as much damage as they could, for these were widely different men from the usual run of natives, much more warlike, fiercer and a stronger, better armed race altogether.

My first care was to set men to work building a house for Lucy, for John Ewen was a bachelor, and the edifice we occupied was hardly suited to a lady. The one we now commenced was made with every attention to comfort and neatness, but was built on piles nine feet high, for as there is no sweet without some bitter, so I regret to say there was one drawback to this earthly paradise, which was its occasional liability to floods. John described to me most pathetically a Christmas Day, which, with the two following, he spent at the top of a tree, his two men being in one near him, where indeed they were pretty well starved before they got safely on high ground again. By careful examination of the flood-marks, we had ascertained that they never rose more than six or seven

Digitized by Google

feet, but to make assurance doubly sure we gave our new house good elevation, the floor being nearly nine feet six off the ground. By this means, and plenty of provisions always in the house during the rainy season, we calculated on out-manœuvring even the flood. It may seem strange to the reader that country which is known to be subject to inundation should be selected, but in no other place could land of such fertility have been found free of timber, which saved us the great expense and loss of time involved in clearing, nor should we have had the water-carriage, without which the heavy machinery could never have reached us. And after all the floods did not happen every year, and one always knew within a week the time to expect them, when by judicious management and planting at the right season but little damage was done.

It caused us an infinity of trouble and annoyance that the stupid people at Sydney invariably sent different ploughs to those we ordered, and when it takes two months to communicate by post, these delays are vexatious in the extreme, particularly when the people to whom you give the orders disobey them under the impression they know better than you, which was unfortunately what happened in our case. Six times, representing nearly eighteen months, did we write and write for one particular kind of plough before we got it, not because there were none, but because they thought it too heavy, and persistently sent lighter ones, which necessity compelled us to retain, otherwise we

Digitized by Google

should have been brought completely to a standstill. The formation of the surface was very curious. It was called devil-devil country, and consisted of countless hillocks or mounds, about eighteen inches high, the top varying from one to three feet in diameter. These grew or stood about six inches apart, and when baked hard by a vertical sun, the reader may imagine it took a pretty strong plough, team, and hand to guide it, to turn over a monster mound weighing three or four hundredweight. On this devil-devil the grass grew highly and rankly, so that it was one succession of falls in walking, from stepping between instead of on the top of the tussucks, but the horses by some wonderful instinct, know where to place their feet, although the grass grows so densely that it is impossible that sight can guide them, and will take you safely over the very worst of it at full gallop, without making one false stride. Indeed, one mistake would break the horse's legs and the rider's back, and I confess I rather jibbed at galloping after cattle over it at first, but found after a time it came quite as naturally to a horse when the grass was long as when it was burned.

When everything was ready for Lucy I sent down to her, and, whilst waiting in Cardwell for the appearance of the ever-late 'Black Prince,' made several visits to the islands in the bay, both for pigeon-shooting and to collect coral to burn for lime which we required in the construction of the works. The islands, each group distinguished by a name, as the Family Islands, &c.,

Digitized by Google

are eighteen miles from the township, varying in length from a couple of hundred yards to a mile, of considerable elevation, and covered with dense vegetation. The beach is one mass of dead coral, of the ordinary white kind, which lies loose, and a boat can be filled in a few minutes. These islands are the favourite resort of the Tallegalla or scrub turkey, which breeds uninterrupted in their dense thickets, and in the month of November the annual migration of the Torres Strait pigeon commences, every available tree being covered with the loose sticks, which compose their nests, and which are so rudely put together that it seems wonderful the eggs don't fall through. The bird itself (*Carpophaga luctuosa*) is very handsome, and is unknown farther south than Port Mackay, where it is an occasional visitor. The entire plumage is creamy white, except the wing-feathers and tip of tail, which are black, and the beak yellow. Every morning the male birds leave the islands at dawn of day, and wing their way in large flocks to the distant ranges on the mainland, where they feed on the numberless wild plums and the wild nutmeg until evening, when they return in the same manner. By going to one of the islands you could get as many as you pleased, but it was difficult to shoot them on the mainland, the scrubs they frequent being impervious. At the plantation vast flocks used to pass at sunset, and by hiding at the edge of the scrub you got a shot every now and then, for though flying very high over

Digitized by Google

the plain they make a sudden dip on coming near a scrub, but from the velocity of their flight, if killed, they generally fell into the jungle and were lost. The size and number of the plums I have found in their crops astonished me; I suppose they were carrying home supper to their better halves, who were minding the nursery at home. There was a beautiful little island called Garden Island, to which the inhabitants of Cardwell used to resort for oyster picnics, and where a great number of handsome cowries of all sizes could be found by turning over the stones at low water. The oysters were very fine and well-flavoured, but repeated visits have rendered getting them more difficult, and to succeed to any extent entails a wet jacket. The bay abounded with life. At sunrise every morning, when the water was like a sheet of burnished steel, a large log could be seen floating under the 'big trees,' which a stranger would pass by unobserved, but which we, the initiated, knew to be the 'Cardwell Pet,' a monster alligator, whose favourite locality this was, chosen doubtless from his hope of snapping up some unfortunate and thirsty dog for breakfast. In this he was generally successful, until he had devoured all in the town but two or three. Two of these were fully awake to the 'Pet's' kind intentions, and would, if told, go down on the beach and bark and play with each other, keeping the while just out of reach of his tail or jaws, until they enticed the monster up on the sand. This means was always

Digitized by Google

adopted when any strangers visited the town who wished to see the 'Pet.' He had been fired at numberless times when Cardwell was first established, but now enjoyed a perfect immunity, and I am sure the inhabitants would have been much vexed had any injury been done him, for they had become proud of their singular favourite. I had not known before that alligators frequented salt water, but there were many fresh-water creeks running into the bay, both to the northward and southward of the town, and perhaps the sea was only used as an easy method of getting from one to the other, although from the numbers I have seen in salt water, finding even their eggs near it, I should suppose they were indifferent, and indeed their taste is somewhat of the bluntest and requires but little pampering. About two hundred yards from the shore, and extending for half a mile with an interval of a few yards between each, could be seen every morning a troop of dugongs or sea-cows (*Halicore Australis*) basking in the early sun, previously to their taking themselves off to graze on their submarine pastures. This extraordinary cetacean was found to possess an oil of equal medicinal value with cod liver, and most agreeable to the palate, and was for some time in much request at Brisbane, where its qualities first became known; but the greedy fishermen mixed shark oil and other abominations with it, until it lost its good name, though I am convinced, from personal experience of both, that pure dugong is more nourish-

Digitized by Google

ing than cod liver oil, without taking the taste into consideration, a matter which I confess I consider of much importance to invalids who have a natural repugnance to nauseous draughts. Its favourite haunts are bays into which streams empty themselves, and where the water is about two to five fathoms in depth, feeding on the submarine vegetation growing on the banks, for which purpose the upper lip is very large, thick, and turning down suddenly at nearly a right angle with the head, much resembles an elephant's trunk shorn off at the mouth. Its length averages from eight to fourteen feet, there is no dorsal fin, and the tail is horizontal; colour blue, and white beneath. Its means of propulsion are two paddles, with which it also crawls along the bottom, and beneath which are situated the udders, with teats exactly like a cow's. Its flesh resembles lean beef in appearance, though hardly so good to the taste, and the skin can be manufactured into gelatine. This most useful animal was but rarely disturbed; every now and then two or three would be harpooned and boiled down, but there is an opening on that coast at any time for a man with the proper coppers, a good boat and crew, for many a fine whale I have seen in the bay that would have fallen an easy prey to anyone who could make use of it. Every now and then the little town would be awakened from the somnolency which was apt to overcome it, by the appearance of a dirty-looking little schooner, which would anchor for a night, buy a few pounds of

Digitized by Google

beef and as many vegetables as were obtainable, and then depart as silently and unexpectedly as she arrived. This was a vessel of the bêche-de-mer trade, and a sad weary trade it is, as the reader will agree with me when I explain what the men employed in it have to undergo.

For nearly thirteen hundred miles along the north-eastern coast of Australia, at a distance of from fifteen to one hundred and twenty miles from the shore, extends the immense coral formation known as the Great Barrier Reef, which has been hitherto the bugbear of navigators and the cause of the Torres Straits passage being so little used. This extraordinary mass of coral rises in some cases sheerly perpendicular, in others slightly slanting from an unknown depth; and on it is found the curious and repulsive-looking sea-slug (*Holothuria*) from which bêche-de-mer is prepared. It is from one to two feet or even more in length, and four to ten inches in girth, looking exactly like the black abominations hanging up in small pork shops in England, but is so highly prized by the Chinese, and is so remunerative that men are induced to spend half their lives in the precarious search for this disgusting-looking delicacy. Having bought a small vessel, drawing but little water to enable her being thrust into the nooks and crannies of the reef, the owner gets another white man, and four or five Kanakas, selecting good divers, and having laid in as much provisions as the vessel can carry, they start on their melancholy cruise, which, if

Digitized by Google

they are unlucky, may last for three years. Having chosen some island as their head quarters they cultivate a patch of land, and plant vegetable seeds to prevent their dying of scurvy, and then go to their fishing ground on the reef where the slugs lie buried in the triturated coral sand, their whereabouts only denoted by the long feathery tentacles which surround the mouth. In shallow water they are speared, and dived for in the deeper. The Kanakas are very skilful at this work, and do not seem the least afraid of sharks, which abound. They remain so long under water that until accustomed to their ways you become quite nervous. If the fish are plentiful they will bring up as many as a dozen at a time. The mode of preparing them is to split open, boil them, press them flat, and dry them in the sun. They are then taken to the rendezvous on the island and smoked with a wood fire, after which process they are bêche-de-mer, and are packed away ready for Celestial epicures. Care must be taken that no damp reaches them, or the whole cargo would be spoilt. Can anyone imagine the misery of such a life for three years, or even three months, cooped up in a rickety little vessel with slugs, Kanakas, and only one white companion, with whom you will infallibly quarrel the first week? I have tried my hand now at most things, but feel grateful to fate for having spared me bêche-de-mer*ing*. There are three or four kinds of the edible slug varying in value, some bringing as high a price as eighteen

Digitized by Google

pounds per hundredweight, others as low as two pounds. The crew are on shares to stimulate them to get a full cargo as soon as possible, and the returns to the owner must be very great. But what amount of money could recompense you for three years on the Barrier Reef?

The township of Cardwell is not of great extent, nor are the buildings remarkable for architectural beauty, being all weather-board humpies with the exception of the police magistrate's house, which is rather an imposing looking edifice. This functionary would seem to be overburdened with work from the number of grandiloquent appointments which he filled, one of which required him to be a couple of hundred miles up country classing land at the moment that, as harbour master, he ought to be ten miles out at sea, so he very judiciously watched events from his verandah with his pipe in his mouth, and thus gave universal satisfaction and showed himself a thoroughly competent Government officer. I remember a wooden-legged bushranger who had been sticking up people, and who called himself 'Oliver, the terror of the North,' being brought down to Robinson the police magistrate, who was somewhat at a loss how to guard the fellow, as the lock-up was in a most dilapidated state, having been untenanted for years, and Oliver was proverbially slippery to hold, when the happy thought struck him that if he deprived the 'Terror of the North' of his timber adjunct he would be safer than all the bolts and bars in the colony could keep him, and the 'Terror'

Digitized by Google

himself looked somewhat chapfallen when Robinson went off after desiring the sergeant of the police to bring the sequestrated limb to his house, this novel mode of detention evidently not being at all to his mind. One hotel, a couple of stores, and a few cottages composed the whole place, and the number of inhabitants was twenty-seven, counting children in arms, so it was not remarkable for gaiety, nor were complaints of overcrowding rife. In fact, the rising sun of Townsville had drawn most of the people down there, and in all but the name Cardwell was deserted. The town was originally set afoot by influential Government people who had a station in the interior and wanted a port to send their wool down to. When the extraordinary fertility of the soil first became known, land ran up to an enormous price, and in a few months Cardwell was a flourishing little place with three hundred inhabitants. But it had been over-praised, and people who had bought without seeing were disappointed, and though they retained the land they had purchased went to some place easier of access to reside. Then came the sudden rise of Townsville from the discovery of the Cape River gold-field, nearly coeval with which the hurricane before mentioned laid both places pretty low; and the unhoused Cardwellites thought, 'Well, if we must build, let it be at Townsville instead of this beautiful but stagnant place,' so flitted, and now Robinson told me he made the seventh adult male in the township.

Digitized by Google

I felt very glad when I had Lucy safely established in her new home, and most pleased at finding she approved of it, for, to confess the truth, I had sometimes thought I should have hit upon some less unfrequented and dull spot to settle her on after all she had gone through already. We went on very quietly for some time, the ploughing and the works progressing slowly and steadily, amusing ourselves, Lucy in getting up a garden and poultry, I with my gun and in looking after the cattle. These were getting wild from the way the blacks tormented them; and finding a valuable working bullock one day with a spear through him we determined to have a day after the blacks, and teach them a lesson should we fall in with any. I have mentioned that the Murray ran through the centre of the plain, but, strange as the proximity appears, another larger river ran nearly parallel with it, and only four miles distant, this latter named the Mackay. Along its banks stood scrub of a mile in depth and so thick that we had only penetrated it by crawling along a black's track on foot, consequently beyond the existence of such a river we knew nothing, and no white man had ever crossed it. (In saying this, I except poor Kennedy, the explorer, who was murdered somewhere beyond it.) We had now come to the conclusion that our safety demanded a bridle path being cut through the scrub to enable us to explore the country beyond the river, and by our presence deter the blacks from committing any outrage against

Digitized by Google

the plantation itself, for it was a ticklish thing now that women and children were there, often left alone and unprotected. John the overseer, Jemmy our black boy, and I started one morning, well armed and having each a cutlass; and arriving at the edge of the scrub set to work to cut a path through with the latter, the best instrument for the purpose that can be found in the absence of the Mexican *mâcheté*, which is even better. To give a just idea of the density of this tropical jungle would be beyond my power; but I am certainly under the mark when I say you could not see two yards in any direction except that we had come, and where we had cut a track. The things that gave us most trouble were a kind of long creeping cane, jointed like rattans, but enclosed in a rough husk which was covered with thousands of prickles resembling inverted fish hooks. These extended from tree to tree in endless numbers, throwing out long slender tendrils not thicker than a wire knitting needle, but armed in a precisely similar manner to the parent shoot, and despite their diminutive size so strong as to tear your clothes off your back, and severely lacerate your flesh should you be stupid enough to try conclusions with them. I have not been able to find out their exact botanical name, but they are a species of the *Rubus Australis*, and are called in Queensland 'lawyers' from the difficulty experienced in getting free if once caught in their toils. I had afterwards a good opportunity of inspecting some of these lengthy climbers closely during the construction of a telegraph line, and stepped one out which

Digitized by Google

was over two hundred and fifty paces; but the men assured me they had met them over three hundred yards in length; and the curious part is that they seem to diminish but little in thickness throughout the entire length, so I doubt if we ever really measured it. So strong are they that we used them for fencing instead of wire, knocking off the outer husk and reeving them through holes bored in the posts just as if they were ropes. Another and far more dangerous tree with which the scrubs abounded was the nettle (*Urtica gigas*), which is any size from a little plant to a towering shrub of thirty feet. The leaf is large and covered with short silvery hair, and when disturbed a pungent dust comes from it which irritates the nostrils and skin. If touched, the pain is most acute and lasts for months, particularly when the affected part comes in contact with water. The fruit is pretty and grows in clusters, resembling a raspberry in form, and of a fleshy pink colour. It is stated that the blacks eat them, but this I should doubt. Tree ferns grow in these leafy recesses to a great height, and we used to search about the roots of a species of wild ginger for small bulbs resembling an artichoke with a kernel inside which tasted like pineapple and strawberries and cream mixed up together.

On the banks of the rivers grows the wild raspberry, larger than the English, but not so well-flavoured, though no doubt cultivation would make it equally good. Wild bananas are in thousands, growing and fruiting just like the cultivated species, but the fruit

Digitized by Google

is much smaller and so filled with little seeds that it is impossible to swallow it, but the flavour is very delicate. After plying our cutlasses for three hours we came to the bank of the Mackay, a most beautiful river, and after great trouble got across, nearly losing our horses, if not ourselves, in a quicksand, in doing so. There was another smaller river running into the Mackay, and we followed its bed up in preference to cutting another track through the scrub. We found abundant signs of blacks everywhere; old gunyahs, ashes where they had lit their fires, fish bones, &c. After going some distance we tied our horses up, and followed a black's track through the scrub, which was most irksome work, for there was barely room for a native's naked body, and we had to stoop, and screw, and bend ourselves into the most grotesque positions, being hung up every three steps by a lawyer, when the only thing was to remain quiet until extricated by your rear rank man. After following this for an hour we arrived quite suddenly at an opening about fifty feet square, evidently cleared by the blacks, and the ground trodden down firmly all over it. We came upon this umbrageous bower so unexpectedly that we were quite mystified; the foliage was so thick that nowhere could the eye penetrate the leafy wall more than a foot or two, whilst the giant creepers, like hemp cables festooned from tree to tree, formed a natural lattice-work of indescribable beauty, by which the sun, despite his vertical glory, was baffled, and

Digitized by Google

only shed a mellow and chastened light on this mysterious and primitive chamber. In the centre was erected an oblong framework of saplings, seven feet by four, raised two and a half feet from the ground on forked uprights. Across this framework were laid a few smaller saplings at intervals of about eighteen inches, the whole firmly secured with thin lawyer cane and resembling a gigantic gridiron, which idea was heightened by the ashes of a fire underneath it, and the cross pieces being blackened and charred. From the ashes being still warm this monstrous cooking apparatus, if such it were, must have been in recent use; and after poking about in the scrub a little, the black boy Jimmy rolled out a singed human head, covered with ants and clotted with blood, the glazed eyes starting out of their sockets, and the remnants of the mutilated features betraying that the spirit took its flight during bitter agony. On examining the altar more closely we could see how the victim, a prisoner I suppose, had been spread-eagled, for the bark was rubbed off where the vines that secured his feet and ankles had chafed the framework during his struggles. The sapling on which the head rested was saturated with blood, which would not have flowed from a corpse; neither could a corpse have been carried through the tracks that led to this Golgotha, all of which afforded convincing proof that the miserable wretch had been conducted there alive, and roasted slowly to death. The weird-like aspect of the

Digitized by Google

place, the subdued light, and the shock this scene of horror had given us, made us glad to leave it and worm our way back to the horses with all the speed we could muster, for we could not help thinking what our own fate would be should we fall into the hands of these savages, and had they only known how helpless we were in the scrub, our guns more dangerous to ourselves than anyone else, they need not have feared attacking us. In the bed of the Mackay we came upon a camp, composed only of gins and piccaninnies, of whom there were thirty or forty. When we galloped up they threw themselves into a heap, like school-boys playing at 'sacks in the mill,' the youngsters being underneath all. Such a seething black mass of legs, arms, and heads was never seen, and how the piccaninnies escaped being smothered I have never understood. Two or three of the old girls were particularly irate, flourishing their yam-sticks, and their shrivelled old chaps rattling out their native Billingsgate with extraordinary velocity, accompanied by most violent gesticulations and menaces, which culminated in one of them spearing Jimmy in the back. Luckily the weapon was blunt and did not penetrate; but I had great trouble in saving her life, for Jimmy had cocked his carbine, and would have sent her to her happy hunting grounds without much ceremony. The men were all away catching wallaby or spearing fish, but we found their weapons which were very curious. The spears were of grass-tree shoots (*Xanthorrhœa*

Digitized by Google

hastilis), tipped with hard wood, and barbed with shark's teeth or the fearful spike of the stingaree. The shields are much longer, and made of wonderfully light spongy wood, grotesquely stained with red and white clay and charcoal; boomerangs we did not find. But the most wonderful weapon is the sword which these northern tribes use; it is made of the hardest wood, five feet long, five inches broad, and correspondingly thick, with a little handle into which a European can only squeeze three fingers with difficulty. Its weight may be easily imagined; but how do they use it? for Sampson in his best days could never have wielded a weapon like this with one hand. It is said the warrior holds it over his head resting on his shield, and lets it fall on his enemy like a miller throwing down a sack of flour. But what is the enemy about the while? for he could either spear him or make his escape ten times over. Some of the fishing nets were most ingeniously made from some spun vegetable fabric, and the 'dilly bags' or baskets of split cane are very curious and beautifully neat, much more so than any others I have seen farther south, and the art is reported to have been taught them years ago by a shipwrecked mariner. The opossum skin rug, which is the sole wear of most blacks, seems unused by these; a very strange blanket made from the inner skin of the tea-tree bark (*Melaleuca*), tanned, and beaten between stones until flexible, is substituted, but few had even these, for the climate

Digitized by Google

was so mild that a kangaroo bone thrust through the cartilage of the nose afforded ample protection. We were very anxious to get a lad of ten or twelve years old, thinking he would tell us about the manners and customs of his tribe, and would be most useful amongst the horses could we persuade him to stay. We therefore tried to lug a smart little fellow out from the mound of gins, who redoubled their efforts to hide him, and struggled and jabbered at such a pace that we feared we should never get him without violence. Suddenly the black mass rolled off in every direction, and we secured the lad, our unknown ally being Jimmy, who had picked up a burning firebrand from the ashes, and thrown it on the top of the writhing heap, which accounted for their radiating. We now thought it time to decamp as the sun was getting low, so mounted, Jimmy carrying 'Johnny Mackay'—as the boy was christened on the spot—on his saddle before him. Poor little fellow, he was in a dreadful fright of a horse, and struggled so much that we feared Jimmy would lose him. I took a sword and shield as curiosities, and when we got back and dismounted, Johnny Mackay was handed over to Emma, Jimmy's gin; but, getting hold of the enormous sword, which was fully a foot taller than himself, with one hand, and the shield with the other, the plucky little rascal stood at bay, looking more ludicrous in his pigmy wrath than I can express. Emma rushed at him, snatched him up still clinging to his weapons, and

Digitized by Google

kissing him, carried him, kicking most indignantly, into their hut, when we saw him no more until the morning. In less than a week he had learnt to ride, and knew the horses by name. But, alas! when he had been with us a fortnight, and just as he and Emma, who was a Hinchinbrook Island gin, were beginning to understand each other, he bolted, his clothes being the only trace of him left. He had been present at the killing of a bullock the night before, and seemed astounded at a rifle knocking down so big a beast, so we hoped he would take such a report to his friends of our powers of slaying that we should not be troubled by them any more.

In due time the South Sea Islanders we had sent for arrived, fine, strong, sturdy-looking fellows, twenty in number. They seemed very cheerful, and glad to get ashore again after their long cruise, and on reaching the plantation settled down at once in the huts we had built for them, and made themselves perfectly at home in a very short time.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XI.

POLYNESIAN LABOUR ACT.

THE question of labour is one that so deeply concerns the success of cotton-planting and other undertakings of a similar nature in Australia, and the difficulty of obtaining hands to work the plantations, without recourse to immigration of South Sea Islanders, is so great that I have thought it worth while to devote a chapter to some account of the labour thus imported and to the Act (of the Colonial Parliament) 31 Vic. 47, which, whilst it sanctions the immigration and employment of the islanders, affords them proper protection and the advantages due to their work. I am the more anxious that my readers should be made acquainted with the provisions of this Act, because recent events have served to create much prejudice against the whole system of the importation of Polynesian labourers from their own islands, instead of directing it against the flagrant abuses which have crept in, and which the Act itself has been framed to meet. No doubt it is impossible that these abuses can be too gravely censured, and I am far from saying that the working of

Digitized by Google

the Act is so complete as to exclude all possibility of their occasional recurrence; but, meantime, it should in fairness be borne in mind that the occasional enormities perpetrated by the importers, and the consequent hideous retaliation of the islanders, are more apt, from their sensational character, to come before and impress the public than the more dull details of the good that is being done to the Islanders themselves, and through them to the cause of humanity and civilisation by their employment in honest, remunerative work; and thus people, hearing only one part of the question, and that the worst, carelessly accept it as a sample of the system, and unhesitatingly condemn the whole. Whether the importation and employment of Polynesian labourers, conducted lawfully in accordance with the provisions of the Act, is either detrimental to them or shocking to civilisation my readers may judge for themselves from a perusal of its enactments as given below. Before, however, going into the details of the Act, it may not be amiss to give some account of the circumstances which led to its introduction.

In 1863 a cotton plantation was commenced on the upper part of the Logan River, about forty miles from Brisbane, by Captain Towns, a merchant and shipowner and a member of the Legislative Council of New South Wales. The land was very good, being a black deep alluvial soil, and there was every prospect that Townsvale plantation, as it was called, would be a success. The only serious hindrance to its prosperity

Digitized by Google

was the high rate of labour; and in order to supply this at a rate that would make his plantation remunerative, Captain Towns had recourse to the importation of sixty South Sea Islanders from the Polynesian group. Perhaps anticipating the indignation which such a step would be sure to raise in many quarters, he proceeded with some caution in this undertaking. He sent one of his own ships for his new labourers, and entrusted their engagement to a Mr. Ross Lewin, a man who was well known amongst the natives of the islands, and who, moreover, spoke their language, and with this Mr. Ross Lewin he lodged two documents, proofs in themselves, as I suppose he fondly hoped, that his intentions were of a benevolent nature. The first document was a form of agreement binding himself to pay each labourer wages at the rate of ten shillings a month, to supply him with food, shelter, and protection, and to return him to his home within twelve months if he so required. The second document was a letter, addressed to any missionary into whose hands it might come, explaining the nature of his enterprise, and soliciting his support and assistance in furtherance of a scheme which, he pointed out, would do more towards civilising the natives in one year than ten years of missionary labour; praying that a teacher or reader might be sent with the emigrants, and stating that he proposed, should the scheme prosper, to bring over in course of time their wives and families. His intentions, so far as they were

Digitized by Google

apparent in these documents, were no doubt satisfactory, and were so pronounced by the Colonial Parliament, before whom copies of his engagements and instructions were ordered to be laid.

The sixty islanders thus brought over by Captain Towns were of course but a first instalment, and in course of time it was found advantageous to import many more as the plantation became more prosperous. They were chiefly taken from the isles of Tanna, Sandwich, Malicolo, and Erromango in the New Hebrides, were well-shaped men, and were found to be very docile and quiet. Their food, drink, and clothing were probably not heavy items in Captain Towns' expenditure, for they drank nothing but water, and usually dressed in little more than the neat brown suit with which nature has provided them. They were lodged in a large building, sixty feet by forty feet, divided into two rooms, built of weather board, covered with grass, and surrounded by a broad verandah. These rooms were fitted up with bunks, broad enough to hold two, supplied with blankets, and having thick sacking at the bottom. There would be a fire in the middle of the room, which served to augment the little light that came in at the door, for there were no windows, only air-holes close under the roof. By the islanders I have little doubt that this domicile was considered a very delightful abode. They shared it, it is true, with countless fleas, who, however, troubled them but little, and were made

Digitized by Google

perfectly welcome. Eventually there were, I believe, other huts built about the plantation, Captain Towns considerately allowing the different tribes to dwell apart. As for their work it was principally of a very light order, consisting mostly in sowing, picking, and bringing in the cotton, but as cotton-growing is continuous, there may be said to be no slack time of the year for these labourers. The land at Townsvale was worked by a steam plough, the engine managed by an English engineer, but a great deal of the working of the plough falling to the islanders' share. The cotton was picked and gathered into bags in the field, and each man brought in his bag for weighing in the evening, when prizes were given for the greatest amount collected, the prizes consisting of pocket-knives, belts, buckles, beads, tobacco pipes, and such like. Nearly all of them smoke, and have a daily allowance of tobacco, which, if a man does not consume himself, he readily manages to barter away amongst his friends. Townsvale plantation seems to have thriven well, and indeed the returns on all the plantations were very encouraging. In 1864, 38,730 lbs. were raised, and in ten months of 1866, 183,630 lbs., or 612 bales, clean cotton and fit for shipment, of which 612 bales no less than 267 were furnished by the Townsvale plantation.

Matters were going on thus smoothly for the cotton growers, when in 1867 public attention was directed to the question of imported labour, some suspicions having been raised that fair play was not always

Digitized by Google

accorded to the islanders. In April of that year, Captain Luce, R.N., of H.M.S. 'Esk,' the senior naval officer in Australia, reported having accounts of the loss of several ships, and of the murder of Europeans at the South Sea Islands; and that it appeared from a letter written by a trader in those seas that 'the natives say that they are perpetrating these atrocities in revenge for the loss of many of their countrymen, who were carried away three years ago to Queensland and the Fiji Islands by Europeans, who hired them as labourers, and promised to return them to their homes in twelve months.'

In consequence of this report an enquiry was made and the official returns showed that 382 South Sea Islanders had been landed, of which number 78 had returned; that those sent back had engaged for only one year, whilst most of the remainder were under an engagement for three years, when they would be sent back to their native islands. Governor Sir George Bowen himself made an inspection of the Townsvale plantation, when 160 islanders were paraded before him, all seeming well fed and contented, and many expressing their intention of eventually bringing over their wives. It appeared that the Masters' and Servants' Act, 25 Vic. 11, which was in force in Queensland, applied to labourers engaged in all foreign countries, and that in 1862 the Queensland Parliament had passed an Act, 26 Vic. No. 5, to give the force of law to regulations for the introduction and protection of labourers from British India.

Digitized by Google

Despite, however, these satisfactory inspections and the powers conferred by the Acts in force, Government became alive to the fact that some definite Act was required to regulate a traffic so dangerously capable of abuse as that of the importation of ignorant islanders. A Bill was therefore introduced, containing ample provisions for securing fair play to both parties, and if any weight is to be attached to the apprehensions of many of the colonists, its introduction came by no means too soon. In January, 1868, a petition was presented by some of the inhabitants of Queensland, stating that many natives had been kidnapped and brought away from their islands by force, whilst others had been enticed away by false and deceptive representations; that their promises of return had not been fulfilled, and that many were detained under pretence that they were under an engagement for three years; and, finally, that this breach of faith had led to the loss of several vessels and the murder of Europeans by the islanders in revenge for the wrongs suffered by them at the hands of the importers; the petition praying that the whole traffic might be prohibited. Meantime, Lord Belmore, Governor of New South Wales, reported a murmur from the islands themselves very similar to that raised in Queensland. In February, 1868, a petition was presented by eight Christian missionaries, praying for an investigation into the engagement of natives of the New Hebrides. The statement of men so conversant with the

Digitized by Google

habits of the islanders as these missionaries in my opinion deserves some weight. For some time back, their petition averred, natives had been carried away ostensibly as labourers, to Queensland, Fiji, New Caledonia, Tahiti, Torres Straits, and other parts; that the traffic was being carried on on such a large scale that in eighteen months vessels, more or less engaged in it, had called no less than eighteen times at the one island of Faté, and had carried off as many as 250 natives from seven villages; whilst that many were taken by force they adduced the following instance to prove: Some natives of Pango had put off in a canoe to a ship under the British flag lying off Fil Harbour, Faté, when they found that she was bound for the Fijis, and had 110 natives on board. On nearing the ship the natives on board warned them off, stating that they had put off and come on board in a similar manner to trade, and had then been carried off. The mission further complained that the natives were ill-treated, even murdered, by the people carrying them away, that they were kept away for longer periods than they had engaged for, and were very poorly paid; one man, a native of Faté, as an instance, having received for five months' service on board a trader the extravagant remuneration of four handkerchiefs, a few pipes, and a few figs of tobacco. Men's wives, too, they said, despairing of their husbands' return, allied themselves to other men, and that this was not unnaturally the frequent cause of much disturbance

Digitized by Google

and even war. That as the strong and young men were always taken, the old and infirm, with the women and children only, were left, and that this materially interfered with the raising of food, procuring fish, and other work essential to the well-being of the natives. They complained that the whole system was under no control and that the natives were at the mercy of any who could by force or persuasion draw them from their homes. Under these circumstances, the New Hebrides mission denounced the trade, as carried on, 'as in violation of the natural rights of man, as calculated to be injurious to the social, moral, and spiritual interests of the natives, as demoralising and degrading to the white men engaged in it; as, in short, a revival of the slave trade without that security for the temporal well-being of those who are the subjects of it which would be derived from the fact of their being the property of a man who had invested a large sum of money in their purchase.'

Such appeals as the above, based on no interested motives other than a desire for the well-being and protection of an ignorant helpless people, fully merited the notice of Government. In March, 1868, therefore, the Act, as abridged below, was passed, Colonel O'Connel, the acting governor, admitting that it was desirable it should immediately have force. That obedience to all its provisions can uniformly be insured in the operations of a trade carried on over so extensive an area may perhaps be doubtful, but the good treatment of the natives on the plantations, such as Townsvale,

Digitized by Google

near to the principal towns, can at least be jealously watched, and all contracts properly enforced by means of the powers conferred by the Act. Whether it would be right to abolish altogether instead of organising the introduction of Polynesian labour, is, I am aware, a much-vexed question, and one that admits of weighty arguments on both sides. Without wishing to give an opinion one way or the other, I must remind my readers that by putting a stop to the only means of obtaining labour to work the plantations remuneratively, Government would undoubtedly be the means of crushing almost in its infancy what certainly has prospects of becoming a source of wealth and prosperity to the colony.

The Act 31 Victoria No. 47, entitled, 'The Polynesian Labourers' Act, 1868,' after reciting the expediency of introducing and protecting Polynesian labourers, enacts in Clauses 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, That no person may introduce Polynesian labour into Queensland except in accordance with its provisions; that subject to a penalty not exceeding 50*l.*, all importers shall make a return to the immigration agent or other authorised agent within four months of the passing of the Act of all Polynesian labourers in their employment, stating number, names, ages, and any other particulars that may be required; it likewise extends its provisions to labourers imported before the passing of the Act, and provides for the appointment by the governor of proper inspectors to enforce the due fulfilment of its obligations.

Digitized by Google

Clause 6 compels importers to apply to the Colonial Secretary at Brisbane, stating the number of labourers intended to be imported, and to give a bond with two sureties to secure their return in three years. On which bond being given a license may be granted to import.

Clause 7 requires that every vessel licensed to import Polynesian labourers shall be properly found with medicines, instruments, disinfecting fluid, and other appliances to meet the exigences of a voyage; and subjects the master of the ship to a fine not exceeding 50*l.* nor less than 5*l.* for non-compliance with its requirements.

Clause 8 compels the master of a vessel to report on arrival the number of labourers on board, and the names of the employers to whom they have been or are to be indented; and prohibits his landing any immigrants until he has received from the proper agent a certificate to the effect that the following regulations have been complied with:

1. The production by the master of the vessel of a certificate signed by a consul, missionary, or other known person, that the labourers have voluntarily engaged themselves and entered into their agreements with a full knowledge and understanding of the nature and conditions of the same; and that when they were embarked they were not known to be afflicted with any disease, and were neither maimed, halt, blind, deaf, dumb, idiotic, or insane.

Digitized by Google

2. The production by employers of the certificate authorising them to recruit.

3. That proper means have been taken by the authorised agent since the arrival of the ship to ascertain whether the labourers fully understand the nature and terms of their agreement, and have voluntarily entered into the same. That the proper agreements have been signed, and the employers duly bound to observe the rules framed for the treatment of their labourers.

Clause 9. All agreements are to be completed, if possible, on board ship.

Clause 10. Arrival of immigrants is to be registered at the Immigration Office or Custom House.

Clause 11. That the scale of rations, as given in a form annexed to the Act, shall not be deviated from. The form being as follows:—

Daily.	lbs.	oz.
Beef or mutton (or 2 lbs. of fish) . . .	1	0
Bread or flour	1	0
Molasses or sugar	0	5
Vegetables (or rice 4 oz., or maize meal 8 oz.) .	2	0
Tobacco, per week	0	1½
Salt „	0	2
Soap „	0	4

Wages, not less than six pounds (£6) per annum, in the coin of the realm.

Clause 12. A register of his labourers shall be kept by each employer, which shall be open for inspection by any magistrate or other appointed person.

By Clause 13 no transfer of an immigrant is allowed to be made, except signed by the transferror and in the

Digitized by Google

presence of a magistrate, and with the full consent of the transferror, the immigrant, and the Government; every transferree entering into a bond similar to that of the transferror.

Clause 14. All deaths and desertions to be reported to the nearest bench of magistrates; a medical certificate of the cause accompanying each report of death.

Clause 15. Masters of vessels to enter into a bond for the prevention of kidnapping and for the due observance of these regulations so far as they are concerned.

Clause 16 provides for the accommodation aboard ship, forbidding a greater number of passengers to be carried than in the proportion of one statute adult to every twelve clear superficial feet allotted to their use, provided the height between decks shall not be less than 6 feet 6 inches from deck to deck. When this height is exceeded, one extra passenger may be taken for every 144 cubic feet of space. Each ship to be fitted with open berths in not more than two tiers, the lowest tier to be raised 6 inches from the deck, and the interval between the tiers to be not less than 2 feet 6 inches. All passengers to be berthed between decks or in deck-houses.

Clause 17 provides that no ship shall carry passengers in greater proportion than one statute adult to every five superficial feet on the upper deck or poop.

Clause 18. The length of the voyage to or from the

Digitized by Google

South Sea Islands shall be computed at thirty days for sailing vessels and thirteen days for steamers.

Clause 19. Each adult shall be allowed three quarts of water daily during the voyage, exclusive of that used for cooking purposes.

Clause 20. Provisions during the voyage to be on the following scale:—

	Daily.	lbs.	oz.
Yams		4	0
Or rice Or maize meal		1½	0
Meat (pork or beef)		1	0
Tea		0	0½
Sugar		0	2
Tobacco (during good behaviour) per week		0	1½

Clothing to be supplied in advance, on embarkation, as follows:—1 flannel shirt, 1 pair trousers, 1 blanket.

Clause 21. Nominal returns of labourers to be made by employers to the Immigration Agent at the end of each quarter.

Clause 22. A return to be forwarded to the Colonial Secretary each quarter, by the police magistrates, of all offences committed by Polynesian labourers, adjudicated upon.

Clause 23. Persons harbouring or employing Polynesian labourers otherwise than under these regulations, without duly reporting the same, shall be liable to a penalty of 20*l.*

Clause 24. Breaches of regulations to be punishable by fine; for first offence not exceeding 10*l.*, for second

Digitized by Google

and subsequent offences, not exceeding 20*l.* nor less than 5*l.*

Clause 25. All engagements made, or to be made, to be subject to the provisions of 25 Victoria, No. 11, 'The Masters' and Servants' Act.'

Clause 26. Every vessel importing labourers contrary to the provisions of the Act to be subjected to a tax of 20*l.* per head for every labourer imported, and in default to be forfeited to her Majesty.

Clause 27. Expenses incurred by Government in affording hospital relief to labourers to be repaid by the employers.

Clause 28. No labourer to be removed from the colony (except to return him to his home), without his consent or the permission of Government. A penalty of 20*l.* being allowed to be inflicted for every labourer removed or attempted to be removed.

Clause 29. Any person supplying Polynesian labourers with spirits shall be punishable, as at present in the case of aboriginals, under the 51st section of 'Licensed Publicans' Act,' 27 Victoria, No. 16.

Clause 30. No employer to deduct from a labourer's wages any money on account of stores supplied.

Such, then, is the Act by which the Queensland Government sought to secure fair play to the imported islanders, and to give the employers all the advantages which Polynesian labour would afford their enterprise. That it was not accepted, however, as satisfactory by those who denounced the whole system is certain; for so

Digitized by Google

early as March 13, 1868, we find the British and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society, complaining through their Chairman, Alfred Bennett, that 'The Act does not appear to them calculated to meet the exigencies of the case, the penalties being wholly inadequate to the offences enumerated,' and expressing a hope that 'her Majesty's Government will prohibit the continuance of importation, experience having lamentably proved that no amount of fine or penalty will suppress illegal traffic in human beings so long as its gains hold out a sufficient inducement for its prosecution.'

That it should give universal satisfaction is, however, scarcely to be expected; for my own part, I cannot but think that a Government bound to recognise the interests of the colonists could do no more than provide that such interests should not be advanced at the cost of justice, exerting itself meanwhile that its enactments should be enforced as far as is possible in so extensive a district, and was hardly called upon to sweep away a thriving system, made sound by the Act, because capable of abuse. Whether the effect of kidnapping and other barbarities committed previously to the passing of the Act, or in defiance of it, will ever be thoroughly eradicated, and confidence restored among the natives towards Europeans, may be another question.

Digitized by Google

CHAPTER XII.

OUR SOUTH SEA ISLANDERS.

OUT of our twenty boys imported from the South Sea Islands, six were from the Island of Tanna, eight from Larva, and the remainder from various others. The Tanna men were splendid-looking fellows, tall, muscular, and wonderfully strong. They looked cut out by nature for warriors, and the other boys held them in great awe, though they never took advantage of their superior strength to ill-treat their fellow-workmen. They had a hut to themselves, with bunks rigged up like a ship to sleep in, and their pillows astonished me beyond measure. These were branches of trees a foot in length, with three or four spikes growing out of them, which formed the legs, and constituted one of the most uncomfortable resting-places for the head I ever saw; I don't even except a shot-rack, on which as a midshipman I have enjoyed many a sweet, though stolen, snooze. In the evening, when work was over, they used generally to congregate round their fires, and sing and smoke for a time, soon, however, turning in. As labourers they were

Digitized by Google

the most willing, trustworthy fellows possible, requiring no superintendence whatever. One man was usually looked up to by each set of islanders as a chief, and they implicitly obeyed him in everything; working, without any supervision, in a conscientious way that you would seek for in vain amongst Europeans. I found them docile, laborious, light hearted, good-tempered, and most faithful and affectionate. Their work amongst the cane consisted chiefly of 'trashing'—that is to say, stripping off the dry and superabundant leaves by hand to admit the light and air freely to the lower part of the canes, banking up the roots, and keeping down the weeds; and I have often left them for a fortnight at a time, having pointed out what was required, and on returning found they had done considerably more than I had expected of them. There is some pleasure in dealing with boys like these, instead of the constant supervision and driving required to get a fair day's work out of a white man. My partner and I could both be away together, feeling confident that the work appointed would be done as scrupulously in our absence as if we were on the spot. Whenever we had either of us been away for above a day or two, directly the boys saw us riding up, they would throw down their tools and rush at us in a way that at first would discompose the strongest nerves, drag us off our horses, and hoisting us, struggling and unwilling, on the shoulders of four Tanna giants, carry us in triumph to the house, a distance of nearly a

Digitized by Google

mile, one of them leading the horses, and the others jumping, shouting, and laughing with delight, which they vented by slapping us on the back. I used always to be much touched at this spontaneous outburst of affection on the part of these poor savages, and feel confident that by kindness you can get them to do anything. We never rationed them, giving them as much as they liked to eat, which was a saving in the end, for they were always contented and happy, and with a little encouragement grew their own vegetables, and hardly drew upon the store at all. We got some of their own favourite taro (*Colocasia macrorhiza*), of which they succeeded in growing an abundant crop, although we had failed in all our attempts, notwithstanding its being indigenous in a wild state. It is a curious plant, with roots eighteen inches long and six in diameter, growing in swampy ground, and so acrid as to take the skin off the palate and tongue and inflict the greatest torture if tasted uncooked. It is the Polynesians' favourite diet. They consume a great deal of sugar-cane, in fact employ all their spare time in munching it; it is most fattening food, and they soon got as plump as partridges, and shone like dollars. Ordinary animal food they did not seem to care much about, more particularly salt meat; but I am convinced they are cannibals—at all events the Tanna men. Sunday was always strictly observed as a day of rest, and on these occasions the boys used to roam about in the scrubs. We never thought about

Digitized by Google

what they did with themselves during these excursions until it came to light in the following manner. There had been recently discovered in this neighbourhood a large bird, somewhat resembling the emu, but thicker and stronger, and an inhabitant of the dense scrubs. It was, in fact, a true cassowary, a bird whose existence on the Australian continent was hardly known. Only two had hitherto been shot—one of which is now in the British Museum—and as the jungle along the banks of the Mackay was their favourite abode, we determined to give the boys two or three muskets, for they reported that they constantly saw them, and could shoot one easily if they had a weapon. I may mention that the Tanna men had all provided themselves by hook or by crook with some implement of warfare; a rusty cutlass or two furbished up, or a bar of iron nearly an inch in diameter, cut into two-foot lengths, which they threw with immense force and dexterity; indeed, I have seen their chief—a son of Anak named 'Sale'—hurl one against a gum-tree stump with such power that the blunt end stuck in, and the bar doubled up. Just now we noticed that the Tanna men had adopted a Larva boy, taking him from his own hut and installing him in theirs, where he was in clover; for they would not allow him to help in the cooking, carrying water, or anything, but allowed him to sit idle while they made much of him. This was rather incomprehensible, but a few weeks brought a solution of the mystery. One Sunday

Digitized by Google

evening, a little before dusk, Lucy and I were sitting on the verandah, when we heard a tremendous yelling and shouting coming nearer and nearer, and soon made out the whole force of Kanakas approaching the house, four of the number carrying some heavy body on poles, the remainder dancing and howling like so many madmen. As they came nearer we could make out Sale, the Tanna chief, a few paces ahead of the rest, flourishing a cutlass in one hand, and leading a little black boy of six or seven years old with the other; then came the men with the poles, on which was placed a magnificent full-grown male cassowary; the remainder bringing up the rear, jumping and shrieking in the most appalling way. About thirty yards from the house the procession halted, when Sale came to the front, and executed a *pas de seul*, amidst the applause of his comrades. He still retained the child's hand, and every now and then holding him out at arm's length he made his cutlass whistle round the ugly little black face, which was upturned wonderingly to his, but evinced no fear, and the poor little thing nestled close up to the giant, directly he ceased dancing. Sale then made a speech of mixed Tanna and English, the purport of which we at length made out to be 'that he and his warriors had killed the big fellow fowl, and had fought with "man of bush," whom they had altogether destroyed, and they had brought the boy to show Lucy how they killed their prisoners in Tanna; after which, if we showed any further curiosity, they would willingly initiate us into

Digitized by Google

the most approved way of cooking the said boy; winding up with a polite invitation to supper, when we could have "filet de garçon sauvage," or any other dainty morsel we might have a fancy for.' Poor Lucy was horrified, and I hardly knew what to do, for I doubted much if they would listen to what I said, much less obey me. However, I rushed down the steps, snatched the boy from Sale, and hoisted him up to Lucy, who let him out at the back, where he dived into the reeds surrounding the lagoon, and disappeared. Sale was rather crestfallen, half angry, half frightened, for I abused him well. However, I walked up to the cassowary, praised them all round, promised them a holiday the next day, and in a minute or two they had forgotten all about their supper, which I have no doubt was making the best of its way through the swamp to such of its tribe as had escaped Messrs. Sale and Co. I at once set to work skinning my prize; but, though I took every conceivable precaution, owing to the silver fish, and the imperfect means of curing it I had at hand, it was destroyed. As this beautiful bird is hardly known, I will give a short description of it. An inhabitant of the densest scrubs, through which it worms its way with marvellous facility, jumping over any obstacle it is unable to surmount otherwise, the cassowary (*Casuarius Johnsonii*) stands over five feet in height, and although somewhat resembling an emu, is a stronger and heavier bird, and in every respect hand-

Digitized by Google

somer than the former. The general plumage is glossy black; no wings, four or five strong quills armed at the end with a claw taking their place. The neck is nude, but is adorned in front with a wattle, both being exquisitely coloured green, purple, and vermilion. A curious horny helmet seven inches in height forms the crest. The claws are exceedingly sharp and powerful. Only twice have I ever seen the bird in the open, and then it remained within fifty yards of the scrub. I have stood in dense jungle for hours, eaten alive by mosquitoes, not able even to light a pipe, fearing the 'big fowl's' sharp nostrils would detect the pungent fumes, and have heard one crashing along, so close that it seemed as if I could have touched him, and yet never succeeded in shooting one. I dined off a young one once, which a trooper shot, and found it very good, though not resembling a bird; indeed, I scarcely know how to describe the taste: a slight flavour of veal, with a suspicion of sucking-pig running through it, approximates more nearly than anything else. In the stomach of this little fellow we found twenty-nine quandongs—a blue berry, larger than a marble, having a very pretty stone in it, which is much used for buttons, breast-pins, &c.—the fruit of the tree of that name (*Santalum acrimentatum*). These they had bolted, rough stones and all, which says a good deal for their digestions. I cleaned the stones, and have them still.

The next day I got Sale to give an account of their

Digitized by Google

TRUSTEE
Y'S
SN3330

fight with the blacks, when I found that every Sunday for months had been spent in hunting 'man of bush.' I also ascertained why the Larva boy had got into such high favour. It seems that the Tanna men, having fallen in with and vanquished the blacks on several occasions, fought their battles again over the fire in the evening, and kindled such a warlike spirit in the breast of the Larva boy that he determined to accompany them next Sunday. In the meantime he manufactured a weapon from a shear blade, ground very sharp, and secured to the end of a long sapling. What is to follow may seem to the reader very barbarous, and related in a cold-blooded way; but I simply narrate the account given to us months after the event had taken place, and can safely say that, on discovering the nature of these hebdomadal excursions, we took every care that they should not be repeated. When the Kanakas first arrived the blacks were always prowling round the place, and as the boys were unarmed and frequently much scattered among the cane, though in close proximity to the scrub, from which they might have been assailed at any moment, we had warned them, in case of an attack, not to take to their heels, which would have been destruction, but to charge the foe with their hoes or anything which happened to be at hand. We knew the chances of such a catastrophe were very remote, but we thought, whether probable or not, it was better to put the boys on their guard; after which we dismissed the matter from

Digitized by Google

our minds. Not so the Tanna men, who, after a long palaver, resolved that it was incompatible with their dignity to await an attack, but determined to strike the first blow at the enemy in his own country, and the next Sunday was appointed for that purpose. Whether they were successful or not that day I could not ascertain, but gathered that on several occasions they met and slaughtered the blacks. Neither was I able directly to determine whether they eat them or not, for on this point Sale, my informant, was remarkably reticent. In my own mind, from the fact of their bringing in the child with the intention of cooking him, I have not the slightest doubt that they usually devour their fallen foe. But I now come to the day when they sallied forth with their new recruit, the Larva boy, in quest of 'man of bush.' As Sale, with much exultation and gesticulation, described it to me, they came upon a party of ten—all men—near a small water-hole in the centre of a scrub on the Mackay River, who at once plunged in and remained immersed up to their necks. The hole seems to have been very small, but deep enough to enable them to evade any missiles by ducking their heads under water. Now came the Larva boy's turn for distinguishing himself, for with his shear blade he was enabled to harpoon the miserable wretches one after the other, forcing them towards the side, where they were received and slaughtered consecutively by Sale and Co. Bad enough to read, isn't it? Fancy then a goodnatured-

Digitized by Google

looking giant showing his white teeth in irrepressible glee, and acting the whole scene, describing each thrust and each murderous cast of the iron bar, and counting off three on his fingers as his contribution to the day's bag! The prowess displayed by the Larva boy on this occasion was the cause of his adoption by the clan Tanna, and I should much doubt if he ever returned to his own peaceful island again.

I have now described the Polynesians as they came under my own observation, and would have omitted the horrors related above, had I not deemed it fair that the islander should be shown exactly as he is.

Whether a system of injustice and oppression could be carried on against boys such as ours were, I leave the reader to judge, only saying, for my own part, that I should be sorry to try it. One addition to the 'Polynesian Labourers' Act' could be inserted with good results: a clause preventing their use by squatters as shepherds; for the poor fellows are like love-birds, so gregarious that, if separated from their companions, they pine and die. Employ them on stations by all means if half-a-dozen can be kept, but let them all come together at night; for the invariable result of isolating a boy is that he mopes and finally dies. I will not touch on the exclusion of their wives, beyond saying that, in my opinion, it is cruel and wrong.

Meanwhile John Knox had not been idle, but had made one of those lucky hits that sometimes fall to fortune's favourites. Whilst riding along one day

Digitized by Google

looking for country, accompanied only by Dick, the black boy, he came upon a curious-looking ridge cropping abruptly out of the ground to the height of sixty feet, the peculiar green hue of which struck his eye; and I leave the reader to imagine his feelings on ascending it to find he was on a mountain of nearly virgin copper, and within three hundred miles of the Gulf of Carpentaria, the whole distance being level as a billiard-table, and no difficulties of carriage presenting themselves but a few trifling creeks which could be easily bridged. I heard that the only obstacle in the way of working it was its *over*-richness; for it could not be blasted. The specimens he detached and carried with him yielded above ninety-three per cent. on being assayed, and I may safely say his fortune is made.

Lucy and I were constantly in town (save the mark!) for a week or so, generally timing our visits so as to be present at the arrival of the 'Black Prince,' which noble vessel continued to ply her trade between Cardwell and Townsville, to the intense disgust of her passengers, who were in bodily fear and trembling the whole passage. Indeed, now she wheezed and groaned to such an extent that she could be heard before she rounded the point, and I should imagine was far beyond the reach of cowdung, however thickly applied. English newspapers were our great solace, though but few reached us, and those of broken dates, it appearing to be an understood thing that they are common pro-

Digitized by Google

perty; at all events, the postmaster and his friends imagine they have a better right to first read them than yourself, which privilege they exercise to the utmost, and you may consider it matter for congratulation if in the end they are allowed to reach you. After we had got our letters, we were both exceedingly glad to get back to Beckenham (the plantation), for anything more *triste* and dispiriting than the town it is impossible to conceive. Once, whilst there, we were enlivened by the arrival of a large boat full of men, which turned out to be the long-boat and crew of the 'Icebird,' which vessel had been burnt near Torres Straits. The police magistrate treated them very kindly, supplied them with blankets and provisions, and after a spell of a few days they pursued their way in their own boat in preference to awaiting the arrival of the 'Black Prince.' As it was afterwards proved, the vessel was purposely set on fire; in fact, a more complete swindle was never perpetrated, and only by the veriest accident was it brought to light. What the Customs at Sydney were about I dont know, but the cargo was taken in on one side and passed over the other into another vessel, so that she really sailed without a single thing which was supposed to be on board, except poor John Knox's new drays, which he had built to carry down his copper ore, and which, being through an oversight uninsured, he lost. The owners and originators of the fraud—a well-known Sydney firm—as well as the captain, are now in Darlinghurst gaol.

Digitized by Google

The captain managed the whole thing very cleverly; for he got two or three casks of gunpowder on board, and when they were in the smooth passage between the Barrier Reef and the mainland, had provisions placed in the long-boat under some pretext; then, having smeared kerosene oil about to make the dry wood more inflammable, fired the ship about eleven in the forenoon, and alarming the men about the powder, hurried them into the boat, in which they laid off at a distance until she blew up; the powder serving a double turn, preventing any effort being made by the crew—who were wholly unsuspicious—to extinguish the flames, and destroying all trace of the ship and imaginary cargo.

At Beckenham we had got by this time a beautiful garden, every description of plant growing remarkably well. Owing to the kindness of Mr. Hill, of the Botanical Gardens, who had sent us a box of plants, we had cocoa-nuts, jack-fruit, cherrimoyas, mulberries, oranges, citrons, shaddocks, grapes, peaches, arrow-root, ground-nuts, and one coffee bush, which the second year yielded over four pounds of berries. The cane was coming on splendidly, and we had everything ready for the machinery, having sent south for brick-makers and burnt our own bricks. However, one day in January down came the rain and continued without intermission until the plain was one vast lake, only the tops of the sugar canes being visible. The water rose eight feet up the piles on which the

Digitized by Google

house was raised; the Kanakas' humpies were under water, and they had to take refuge in the verandah, where they remained for five weeks, at the expiration of which the flood subsided. We were half starved, for though expecting a flood, I was unprepared for twenty black guests. I had always intended sending them in to Cardwell when this event took place, where I had secured an empty store for them, and made arrangements with regard to their victualling; but the water was too quick for me, and the road impassable. Immense numbers of flying-foxes used to fly over the house every evening, winging their way like rooks, very high in the air, and flying perfectly straight. I used to watch their coming and shoot as many as I could, which were devoured with much relish by the boys. When the rain ceased—which was after ten days—and the sun shone out again, numbers of large fish would congregate amongst the piles, evidently glad of the shade afforded by the house. They were not to be tempted with hook and line, so I used to wait until a big fellow swam underneath me, and fire straight down at him, and at the sound of the report, one of the boys would dive and bring the prize up. What killed them I don't know, for only in one instance could I discover any wound; indeed I think they were only stunned by the concussion. This flood overthrew all our plans; the cane had to be cut down and allowed to shoot again from the stools or roots; the garden was a mass of slime, and everything upside down. I must

Digitized by Google

confess we were much disheartened, for we had neve contemplated such a visitation of such severity and duration. However, we set to work putting things right; but it was uphill work, and I often found myself wishing I had established myself further south. Fever now set in; not the ordinary fever and ague—to that we were well used—but a low lingering disease, in which the patient became weaker and weaker until he died. The Government had a party of men clearing a telegraph line from Cardwell to the Gulf of Carpentaria: half of the number died, and the police magistrate had to charter a little craft which luckily called in, and send the remainder down, all of whom were ailing. Half the town was dead or dying, and no doctor, no drugs, no anything nearer than Cleveland Bay. I sent Lucy and the children down at once, and don't hesitate to say I would have gone myself had it been possible; but we had news of the machinery leaving Sydney for Rockingham Bay, and I had to be on the spot to receive it. Week after week I waited in town expecting the vessel with the crushing-mill to arrive every day, the fever the while revelling among fresh victims, though hitherto I had escaped. One day, whilst looking out anxiously to seaward as was my wont—there was but little comfort to landward—I made out a moving black object, which I took at first for a canoe, but which approached nearer and nearer until she showed herself a boat. A presentiment ran through me; I had no need to walk down to the beach

Digitized by Google

to enquire; I knew as well as if I had been listening that our machinery was on the Barrier Reef, and that this was the boat with the crew. The vessel had gone aground three days before, and from the heavy nature of the cargo had settled herself so firmly that all attempts to move her were vain. The men were much exhausted, but declared they were willing to pull back and make another attempt to float her. I got them provisions, &c., and hiring a boat and two men myself, started with them on the following day for the vessel. I seemed like one in a dream. I believe I laughed and was quite cheerful. However the brig was broken up when we arrived, and on landing I was down with the fever. I remember nothing until I found myself at Bowen in the A. S. N. Co.'s steamer on my way to Sydney. It appears the 'Black Prince' arrived on the evening of the day I was taken ill, having on board a doctor sent up by Government, who said my only chance was to return in her, and accordingly I was carried on board, and so bade adieu for ever to Beckenham, Cardwell, and all. What has become of the former I don't even know; whether anyone is reaping the benefit of all the money sank upon it by John Ewen and myself I have not yet heard. We paid our men off and threw up the place, John taking the Kanakas to another plantation he owned further south, where they are as jolly as ever, and though still hankering after the Sunday 'man of bush' excursions, they vow they will return *en masse* after visiting their

Digitized by Google

islands. For myself, on reaching Sydney, I was told a sea voyage and cold climate were imperative; so, having been nearly nine years away from the old country, I embarked my Lares and Penates, and thus, though without the high hopes that had animated me when I left, and though broken in health, I still felt inexpressibly happy in the reflection that my Australian trip was the cause of my first meeting her who shares with me the title of these few pages, and that the vicissitudes we had undergone had only served to knit us more closely together. And so, reader, it came about that 'My Wife and I' returned to England.

Digitized by Google

INDEX.

ABO

Aborigines. *See* Blacks.
Acclimatisation Society, 237
Adder, death, 147
Adulteration of spirits, 142
Agreement, necessity of an, 214
Ague, 151
Alligators, 190, 294
— Johnny taken by, 166
Altar, black's, 305
Ants, 148
— white, 149, 216
Athens, Ipswich, 16
Attack on house by blacks, 135
Australian Steam Navigation Company, 26, 215
— scenery, 39

Bar, Wide Bay, 232
Bark, stripping, 63
Barrier Reef, Great, 297
Barri mundi, 192
Bay, Cleveland, 181
— Moreton, 7
— Rockingham, 286
Bêche-de-mer, 297
Benelong, 107
Bite, snake, 146
Blacks, 23, 107, 129, 135, 152, 157, 211, 251, 260, 268, 301
Blankets, bark, 307
Blight, sandy and swelling, 150
Boat accident, 7
Boiling-down establishments, 75
Boots, 189
Botanical Gardens, 23
Bottle, water, 219
Bowen, Port Denison, 27, 168, 180

COC

Bower, blacks', 304
Branding cattle, 71
Breech-loading weapons, 126
Brisbane, river, 16
— town of, 10, 23, 233
Bullock teams, 36
Bunyip, 193
Burdekin River, 59
Bush in earnest, 26
— fare, 119
— incidents, 129
— ranger, 240, 299
Bustard, 122

Calf, shooting a, 206
Camp oven, 28
— police, 153
Cannibalism, 270
Canoe adventure, 163
Capsize of dray, 38
Capture of horse-stealers, 169
Cardwell, 287
Cassowary, 329, 331
Cat fish, 191
Cattle, branding, 71
— management of, 73
— mustering, 69
— slaughtering, 85
Centipede, 52, 148
Chase after blacks, 155
Cheques, dishonoured, 230
Chimney, construction of, 64
Chinamen, 266
Clergyman, bushed, 102
Clerks, valour of two, 240
Cleveland Bay, 181
Cockatoos, 29, 121

Digitized by Google

COC

Cockroaches, educated, 217
Coffee and sugar leases, 282
Copper mine, 335
Coral, 241
'Corner Allotment Johnny,' 177
Cotton, 284
Cows, milking, 82
Crabs, 252
Cradling, 254
Crane, nankeen, 121
Creeks, 39
Cunning of a horse, 42
Curlew, cry of, 18
Curtis Island, 248
Cyclone, 241

Dalrymple, Mr. E., 229
Damper, 20
Denison, Port, 27
Despair, 199
Devil-devil country, 292
Diggings, a turn at the, 245
Dingoes. *See* Dogs.
Dogs, kangaroo, 103
— native, 103
Don River, 27
Dray, fitting up, 161
— horse, 31
— packing, 31
Dress, 187, 218
Drink, curse of, 101, 139
Drugs, 189
Ducks, black, 121
— other varieties, 122
Dugongs, 295
Duke of Edinburgh, H. R. H., 271

Eels, 191
Elphinstone, lake, 229
Emus, 52, 123
Eva, loss of, 243
Experiences, first, 4
Exploring party, 55

Fanner, making a, 259
Fare, bush, 119
Fenian publican, a, 273
Fever and ague, 151
— low, 340

JOU

Fight between blacks, 268
First experiences, 4
— nugget, 255
Fish, shooting, 339
Fishing, 250
Fleeces, rolling, 96
Flies, 125
Flights, sudden, 184
Flood, cause of, 209
— without rain, 168, 196
Floods, 290, 338
Floor, to make a, 65
Foot-rot sheep, 18
Foxes, flying, 209
Furniture, 65

Gaiters, 189
Game, 120
Gap, the, 194
Gardens, Botanical, 23
Gins. *See* Blacks.
Gladstone, township of, 245
Great Northern Railway, 236
Grog shops, 142
Gun, best kind of, 126
Gympie Creek diggings, 262

Hailstorm, violent, 237
Hobbling horses, 33
Hopperings, washing, 254
Home, our bush, 55
Homesteads, 281
Hornets, 149
Horses, endurance of, 133
Horse-stealers, capture of, 169
Hotels, 13
House, description of, 100
Hut, building, 61

Ibis, 123
Incidents, bush, 129
Indignation meetings, 274
Inoculation, 75
Ipswich, 16

Jackass, laughing, 18
Jack Shepherd, 253
Johnny cakes, 20
— taken by alligators, 166
Journey, the return, 160

Digitized by Google

KAN

KANAKAS. *See* Polynesians.
Kangaroos, 105
Kitty, 106
— death of, 110

LAMBING, 91
Lambs, affection of, 92
Land Act, New, 278
Land jobbing, 178
— orders, 175
Laughing jackass, 18
Law, 231
'Lawyers,' 302
Leichhardt Range, 48
Lunatic companion, 232

MACHINERY, loss of, 341
Main Range, 49
March, a long, 218
Market gardening, 283
Marriage, 14
Meat preserving, 76
Medicines, bush, 81
Method of travelling, 221
Monte Christo Station, 248, 256
Moreton Bay, 7
Mosquitoes, 149
Mud, use of, 261
Murder of native police officer, 129
— — a shepherd, 152, 220
Mustering cattle, 69

NATIVE dogs. *See* Dogs.
Nettle tree, 303
New hands, a mistake, 21

OPOSSUMS, catching, 204
Overseers, duties of, 89
Oysters, 294

PARROTS, 29, 121
Pheasant, swamp, 121
Piccaninnies, 119
Pigeons, 122, 293
Pigweed, 120
Pills, Holloway's, 81
Pistols, 127
Pleuro-pneumonia, 73
Ploughs, 291

SOU

Plover, 121
Plums, wild, 208
Poisoning native dogs, 104
Police, native mounted, 109, 111
Polynesian Labour Act, 310
Polynesians, 309, 326
Port Denison, 27, 168, 180
— Molle, wreck at, 243
Priest, 6
Prospectors and prospecting, 246, 258

QUARANTINE, 23
Queensland Steam Navigation Company, 26

RAILWAY, 49, 234
Rainy season, 143
Range, Leichhardt, 48
— Main, 49
Raspberry, wild, 303
Reptiles, 145
Return journey, the, 160
River Bowen, 38, 162
— Brisbane, 16
— Burdekin, 59
— Don, 27
Rockingham Bay, 286
Run or station, 55

SALTING meat, 86
Sand-flies, 149
Scrubs, 302
Season, rainy, 143
Shearers, 94
Sheep, counting, 90
— foot rot, 18
— lost, 90
— management of, 67
Sheep station, description of, 66
Shepherding under difficulties, 190
Shepherds, 21
— duties of, 67
— murder of, 152, 220
— rations of, 80
Shooting, 120
Slabs, splitting, 62
Snakes, 29, 145, 204
South Sea Islanders. *See* Polynesians.

Digitized by Google

SPE

Special constables, 239
Spill, a, 185
Spurs, 189
Squirrels, flying, 210
Station life, 87
Station or run, 55
Station stores, 79
Stingarees, 250
Stockmen, 16
Stockwhips, 76
Stockyards, 69
Sudden flights, 184
Sugar, 274, 278
Sunstroke, cause of, 143
Swags, 17

Talegalla, 124, 293
Thirst, 225
Thorley's food for cattle, 102
Townsville, 181
Tranter's pistols, 127
Troopers, native mounted, 109, 153
— powers of tracking, 117, 158

WRE

Turkey, plain, 27, 122
— scrub, 124, 293

UNEMPLOYED, demonstration by, 239

VEGETABLES, 119
Visitors, 101
Voyage, 5

WATER-BOTTLE, 219
Watershed, explanation of term, 55
Weapons, blacks', 306
Whirlwinds, 144
Whist, 101
Windows broken by hail, 238
Wool, early culture of, 87
— exports of, 89
— packing, 99
— press, 97
— shed, 93
Wreck at Port Molle, 243

LONDON: PRINTED BY
SPOTTISWOODE AND CO., NEW-STREET SQUARE
AND PARLIAMENT STREET

Digitized by Google

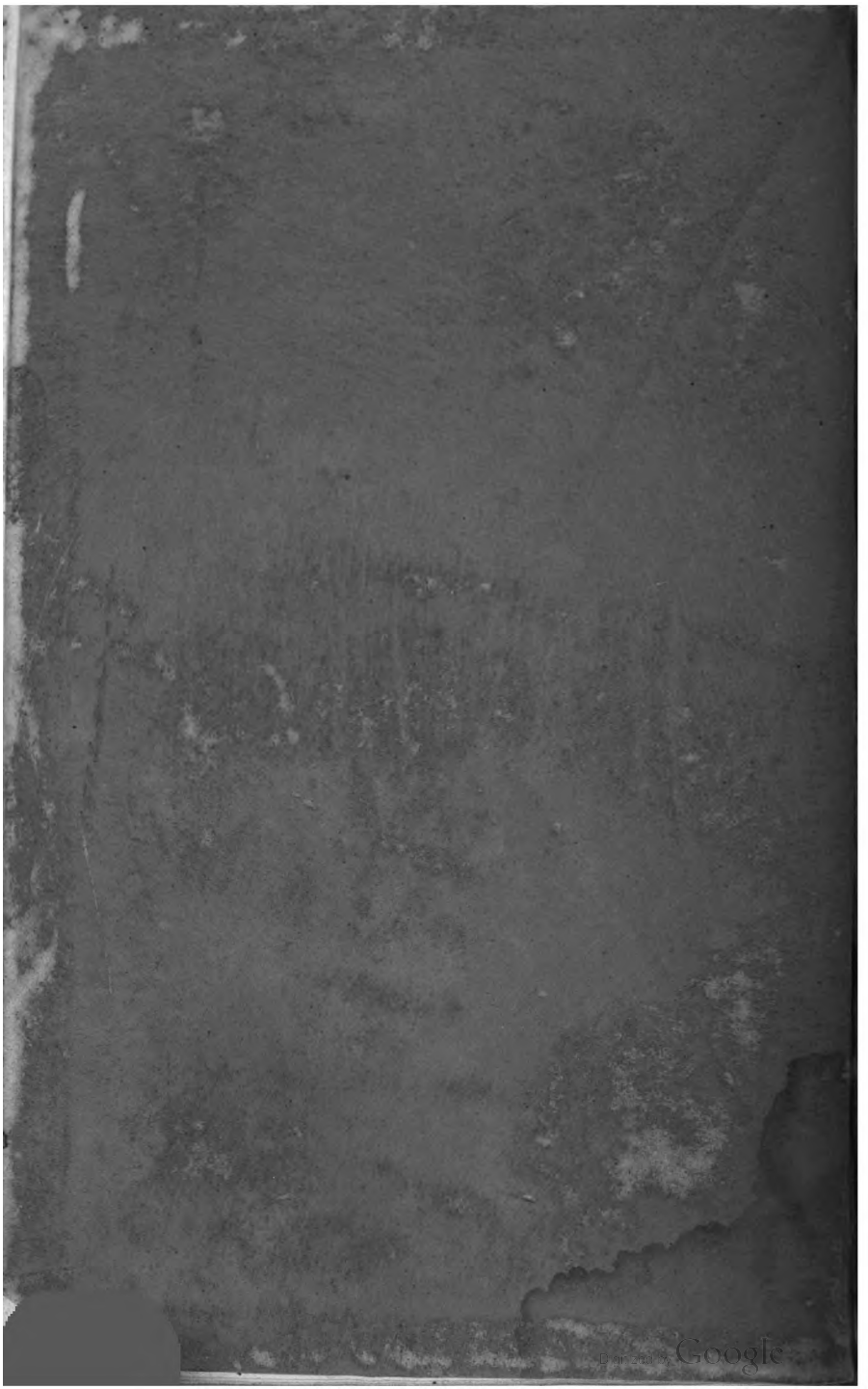
Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google


Digitized by Google

This book should be returned to the Library on or before the last date stamped below.

A fine of five cents a day is incurred by retaining it beyond the specified time.

Please return promptly.

JUL 16 '57 H

JAN 6 '59 H

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google